

How can additional small group art-sessions impact students with Special Education Needs in terms of confidence, mindset, and academic success?



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Students with learning disabilities often become disengaged with their learning process. This personal frustration leads to low personal self-esteem, causing anxiety. **Art-integration** can help students to rebuild their self-esteem through its therapeutic qualities and can be transferrable in other subject fields (Harper, 2013).

The exceptional child should have the chance to explore his or her artistic abilities, for no potential will ever be realized or discovered unless a child tries and freely participates in an activity (May, 2015).

"If art education unlocks 21st Century skills, and Inclusion is ensuring that all students can reach their full potential, then perhaps a safe space where more opportunities are created for artistic expression is recommended."
Bekkie Wasserman

Reflective questions:

- Why isn't art looked at more to assist SEN students?
- Future career opportunities for SEN students? More creative opportunities are needed to assist in their confidence.
- Artistic expression and wellbeing.
- Long-term academic benefit from more art.
- Accomplishment and self-esteem.

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Small group after-school-art class

Case Study



IEP: No formal diagnosis

Unable to complete work independently

Struggles with appropriate peer and staff relationships

Unable to complete the same task as peers.

Art class observation

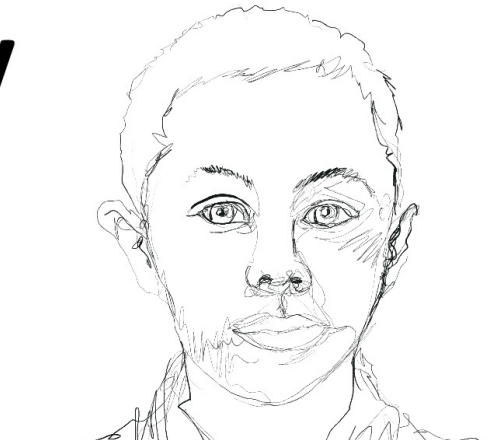
Quite and in 'own' world, fascinated by numbers

Cannot get his hands dirty

Struggles with taking risks

Struggles to use imagination when creating and reflecting on what was done.

Fascinated by 3D printer.



IEP: None

Art class observation

Very quite and withdrawn, never shares work.

New to the school

Slow to get started

Observes peers, with little time to complete own work.

Does not ask for help.

Goes unnoticed.



IEP: Social Emotional

ADHD, Mild Interlectual disability, anxiety and low self esteem.

Art observation

Can only work with 1:1 instruction

Unable to transfer a new skill

Does not ask for help, although often not on the same expectations as peers.

Unable to see what the next step is of the activity

Finishes task very quickly

Unable to trace lines

Unable to clean up after self.

Unable to follow instruction and work independantly.



IEP: Selective Mustism

Social/emotional

Should not be pressured to speak.

Sensitive to noise

Trouble initiating

Freeze response to anxiety

Art observation

Extremely slow to get started.

Very talented and skillful

Needs encouragement to get materials herself

Does not show any emotion

Grey area in terms of pushing her to explore more challenging subject matter

Would be happy to stay in the art room for the entire day

Observation: after small art-group ASA.

A better understanding of the child and his **tactile sensitivities**. Prefers **cutting** over painting. Focuses better if instruction is given 1:1 Loves coming to the art room. Reminded me that we are **teaching the person** and not the subject.

Open minded approach to art making. Follows instructions better by looking at peers work than teacher sample. Openly asks for assistance. **More open** to taking risks.

Willing to take more risks. **More independence** in getting own materials in the room. Takes pride in her work. Able to add more layers and work on the same artpiece for a few sessions. Has grown to be **more confident** in her ability.

Able to **speak more openly** about what her work symbolize. With a partner, she does not perform to her best ability – **social needs** are met first. Seems to be happier at school.



What does the Inclusion teachers say about Art-Inclusion collaboration?

Collective Experience

19 Years

None have ever worked with an art teacher before, but they see the benefit of the collaboration potential.

Collaboration

Can art programs benefit SEN students?

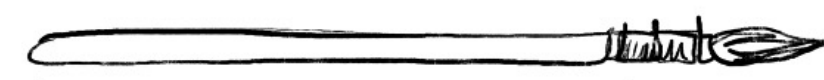
Yes

- Building on fine motor skills.
- Expression
- Finding something that they enjoy.
- Self-esteem

Creating can have a positive impact on student behavior and have an impact on them academically.

Art can have a sensory and psychological balance for SEN students.

Thoughts on additional small group art sessions



What is inclusion and Art Education?

Inclusion:

Inclusive education is defined as: 'the **practice of including everyone** irrespective of talent, disability, socioeconomic background, or cultural origin –in supportive mainstream schools and classrooms where all students' needs are met' (Bock, 2015).

Some challenges of Inclusion according to teachers:

- 1.Lack of professional development
- 2.Classroom sizes.
- 3.Not adequate and reliable support.
- 4.Demanding expectations from parents.
- 5.Cultural barriers around SEN.
- 6.Lack of opportunities for collaboration among teachers. (Bock, 2015).
7. Time taken away from other students. (Gaad & Khan, 2007)
8. Many teachers are reluctant to have students with Individualized Education Plans in their classrooms who may lower their test scores (Harper, 2013).
9. The teachers also expressed that the heavy teaching load in the mainstream classroom makes it hard to meet the needs of SEN students (Gaad & Khan, 2007).

Art Education:

Art education is portrayed as a means of **fostering creative expression**, cultural understanding, and engagement with the world **through artistic media** and practices within an educational context (Menzer, 2015).

Merging Inclusion and Art Education

The benefits for SEN students involved in art activities:

- Increases **self-awareness**.
- Develops **social skills**.
- Develops **problem solving strategies**.
- Allows an individual to engage in **creative thinking skills**.
- **Focus** on the creativity at hand and shut out thoughts that may be intrusive (Alexander, 2012).

Overall, the art classroom builds on the strengths of these exceptional students.

- The visual arts are a powerful teaching tool that can enhance the **cognitive, emotional and social development of children** (Alexander, 2012)..
- Art is therapeutic and can improve **self-esteem, promote self-expression and encourage independence and social skills** (Mastandrea, Fagioli & Biasi 2019).