

# 2013 VSA Intersections: Arts and Special Education

A Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program

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## Exemplary Programs and Approaches



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The Kennedy Center



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# 2013 VSA Intersections: Arts and Special Education Exemplary Programs and Approaches Introduction

SHARON M. MALLEY, EDITOR

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Kennedy Center) is dedicated to promoting opportunities for students in kindergarten–grade 12 arts education through its varied VSA, Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Programs. When teachers and facilitators fully include students with disabilities in well-designed arts education, chances for achievement in many domains can increase (Malley & Silverstein, in press). Students with disabilities who participate in the arts are given opportunities to convey sophisticated ideas, experience validation in their work, and enhance their academic pursuits. Inherent in arts education are means of diverse and variable expressions, responses, and outcomes, allowing students opportunities to diverge from the rote learning often required in other subjects. Thus, students with disabilities can exercise cognitive processes, find and develop their unique voices, and experience overall success (MacLean, 2008).

This second edition of Exemplary Programs and Approaches originates from the Kennedy Center’s 2013 VSA Intersections: Arts and Special Education Conference and Forum, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program. The conference included over 50 sessions covering an array of topics within the intersecting fields of arts and special education. Following the conference, national leaders met in a forum to identify and discuss needs and issues integral to the education of children with disabilities in the arts.

Findings from the 2013 Forum indicated several areas of need, similar to those of the 2012 VSA Examining the Intersection of Arts Education and Special Education: A National Forum (Silverstein, 2012). Participants’ recommendations can be expressed in five broad statements (Malley, in press):

- a. Professional learning should be designed to ensure that all teachers are teaching all students (with an emphasis on inclusion of students with disabilities).
- b. Communication should be reciprocal across all levels of the educational system, from student, to teacher, to school, to district, to the wider society.

- c. Arts educators should be evaluated appropriate to their roles, which require different skill sets and scope of work from those of other educators.
- d. There should be a unified message on the benefits of arts education for students with disabilities, which is communicated across all levels of stakeholders and policy makers.
- e. There should be a robust body of easily accessible knowledge, through research, on the benefits of arts education for students with disabilities.

With this second edition of VSA Intersections professional papers, the Kennedy Center continues to respond to many of the recommendations from both the 2012 and 2013 Forums. The publication itself addresses the need for increasing contributions to the knowledge base, with several articles demonstrating positive research findings. Within the articles there are descriptions of exemplary graduate and applied programs, innovative practices, and models for partnerships. All of the authors are well-respected leading practitioners and/or educators in an arts discipline with expertise devoted to educating students with disabilities. Their collective voices within this publication provide readers with some of the most current exemplary practices and expertise representing a range of arts education disciplines: drama, visual arts, music, and dance.

A continuing theme emerging from both Forums is the need for an ongoing single publication, such as a professional journal, for current practices and research in the arts and special education. In their paper, "Next Steps: New Research and Teaching Journals at the Intersection of the Arts and Special Education," Gerber, Keifer-Boyd, and Crockett demonstrate the need for two professional journals, one for practitioners and one for researchers, and offer examples of similar journals and their online accessibility. Beverly Levett Gerber, renowned in her work as both a visual art and special educator, is Professor Emeritus of Special Education at Southern Connecticut University and the recipient of the National Art Education Association 2011 Lowenfeld Award. Karen Keifer-Boyd, Professor of Art Education and Women's Studies, School of Visual Arts, University of Pennsylvania, co-founded the journal *Visual Culture and Gender*. In this article she shares her knowledge as co-editor of that publication. Jean Crockett is Professor and Director of the School of Special Education, School Psychology, and Early

Childhood Studies at the University of Florida. Her research addresses leadership and policy in the administration of special education, and she is currently conducting an analysis of published articles on arts and special education.

In “Exemplary Theater Practices: Creating Barrier-Free Theatre,” Sally Bailey draws upon 25 years of experience to share her approaches and strategies including students with disabilities in drama education and theatre production. Sally is Associate Professor of Theatre at Kansas State University and the author of the book “Barrier-Free Theatre,” a comprehensive manual for including students with disabilities in all aspects of theatre arts.

Tim McCarty’s paper “Visual Theatre: Building a Bridge for Student Success” narrows the scope of drama education to address the needs of students who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing attending the Maryland School for the Deaf. In his paper he describes the Quest TheatreBridge program, including elements of lessons designed to address communication and literacy skills. Tim is the Founder and Artistic Director of Quest Visual Theatre, Lanham, Maryland, and has worked for over 20 years developing theatre programs for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Quest has achieved international recognition, and most recently Tim has shared his expertise with the Deaf community in China.

Continuing with the topic of drama in education, Linda Krakaur provides readers with a framework for teaching literacy to students with learning disabilities through drama techniques and Universal Design for Learning. Her paper, “Mastering the Curriculum: Students Framed as Experts,” encapsulates key aspects of her Master’s degree thesis. She is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Teacher Education and Professional Development in the College of Education at the University of Maryland.

Sophie Lucido Johnson, an artist and special education teacher in New Orleans, developed an arts integrated social emotional curriculum for students with emotional behavioral disorders. In her paper “Emotional Intelligence through Art: Strategies for Children with Emotional Behavioral Disorders” she shares strategies and outcomes of the program, which targets students who developed post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of hurricane Katrina. The program is currently offered in four New Orleans charter schools.

In “Fostering Resilience in an Intergenerational Art and Literacy Program for Homeless Families: An Analysis of Curriculum,” Donalyn Heise and Laurie MacGillivray developed and analyzed a literacy program they implemented with homeless children and their mothers who are in a drug/alcohol addiction program. The curriculum incorporates a variety of visual art lessons and literacy skills building, with the goal of supporting resilience. The authors share their strategies and research findings. Donalyn is Associate Professor of Art Education at the University of Memphis, and coordinates the art education program in the Department of Art within the College of Communication and Fine Arts. Laurie is a Professor in the Department of Instruction, Curriculum, and Leadership at the University of Memphis, with a research focus on literacy practices in urban areas.

Lynne Horoschak and two of her students, Kim Gavin and Veronica Hicks, describe a unique college curriculum in “Reflections on Moore College of Art and Design’s Master’s Degree Program in Art Education with an Emphasis in Special Populations.” Lynne developed the program drawing on her over 30 years experience as an art educator. She is now Distinguished Professor and Program Manager of the Moore College program. The paper includes summaries of each of Kim and Veronica’s thesis research. Kim, currently an art teacher in Philadelphia Public Schools and adjunct professor at Moore College, describes her study of art classroom assessment strategies for special education and English language learners in the acquisition of language and literacy skills. Veronica, who is pursuing her doctorate at Pennsylvania State University, summarizes her action research with female foster students with disabilities, examining the impact of an after-school art club on self-efficacy.

In “IDEA  $\leftrightarrow$  Empowerment Through Difference  $\leftrightarrow$  Find Card Strategies: Communitarian Approaches to Empowerment,” Karen Keifer-Boyd and L. Michelle Kraft provide a strategy for including all students in visual art curriculum assessment through the use of “Find Cards.” They describe a communitarian approach to teaching and learning in the art classroom, and how “Find Cards,” developed by Keifer-Boyd in the 1970’s, provides a tool for inclusion in a variety of disciplines and settings. Michelle is Professor of Art in the Department of Communication and Fine Arts and Assistant Dean of the J. E. & Eileen Hancock College of Liberal Arts and Education, Lubbock Christian University in Lubbock, Texas.



Addressing the needs of music educators to effectively include students with disabilities, Rhonda Vieth Fuelberth and Lynda Ewell Laird provide an explanation of Universal Design for Learning and guidelines and strategies for inclusion in the music classroom. Their paper, "Tools and Stories: Preparing Music Educators for Successful Inclusive Classrooms through Universal Design for Learning," originates from the work of their graduate students, who contributed to a strategy bank based on experiences as in-service teachers. Rhonda is Associate Professor of Music Education and the Graduate Music Education Coordinator in the Glenn Korff School of Music, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Lynda is a doctoral student and graduate teaching assistant at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where she is the recipient of the prestigious Hixson-Lied Fellowship.

To conclude this edition of exemplary papers Mark Tomasic draws upon over 20 years of experience working with the Dancing Wheels Company and School, in "Developing Curricula and Assessment Tools for the Physically Integrated Dance Class." He is currently Artistic Advisor for the company and school and serves on the Dance Department faculty of Santa Monica College in California. His paper provides dance educators with practical strategies for including dancers with physical disabilities in modern dance training and performance, based on his book, "Physically Integrated Dance: The Dancing Wheels Comprehensive Guide for Teachers, Choreographers, and Students of Mixed Abilities."

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## Next Steps: New Research and Teaching Journals at the Intersection of the Arts and Special Education

BEVERLY LEVETT GERBER, KAREN T. KEIFER-BOYD, AND JEAN B. CROCKETT

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Office of VSA and Accessibility has twice brought together leaders in the fields of special education, arts education (visual and performing) and arts research, with representatives from the U.S. Department of Education. The 2012 VSA Examining the Intersection of Arts Education and Special Education: A National Forum produced two tangible results: (a) a new on-line arts/special education bibliography (The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, n. d.); and (b) a book of professional papers that focused, for the first time, on issues relevant to their intersection (Malley, Ed., 2012). The bibliography will have periodic updates by Kennedy Center staff.

One year later, the 2013 VSA Intersections: Arts and Special Education Conference and Forum again brought together people with an emerging professional focus to share their ideas, concerns, and goals regarding the intersection of arts and special education. One expressed concern was the need "to tell our professional story" – the collective voices of arts educators who reach and teach students with disabilities and the researchers who contribute to and validate their knowledge base. It is also the story of special educators who value and use the arts to teach their students.

The arts/special education professional story is multi-faceted, continually unfolding and needs to be told. Arts/special education stories tell about students with special learning and/or behavioral needs who experience school as a difficult place. Yet, many of these students make it through school due to their arts experiences (Gerber, 2011). The arts offer a global way of interpreting and expressing information. Difficulties in traditional classroom subjects need not transfer to the artroom. Arts/special education stories are told by classroom arts teachers who observe students with disabilities blossom in studio art classes as they gain recognition and approval from their peers, often for the first time (Lokerson & Joynes, 2006).

Countless actors who win acclaim on stage and screen, despite diagnosed learning difficulties, demonstrate the value of performing arts education. Students with disabilities can

excel in and through the arts. Over the past decade, a small but growing body of research is beginning to document and demonstrate the importance of the arts in the lives of students with disabilities.

Currently, there is no *home* or central professional location for arts/special education research and inspirational and innovative stories of teaching and learning. Information on intersections of art and special education is dispersed among many journals and is difficult to access. "An Attack on the Tower of Babel: Creating a National Arts/Special Education Resource Center" (Gerber & Horoschak, 2012) addressed the problems encountered by such a search. Arts/special education information *is available* in textbooks (Anderson, 1992; Gerber & Guay, 2006; Gerber & Kellman, 2010; Kellman, 2001; Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013; Nyman & Jenkins, 1999; Wexler, 2009), journal articles (Blandy, 1994; Blandy, Pancsoar, & Mockensturm, 1988; Derby, 2011; Guay, 2003; Kellman, 2004; Kraft 2006), research (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999; Catterall, 2009; Malley, Dattilo, & Gast, 2002), and doctoral dissertations.

However, there are no journals specifically for research and teaching the arts to students with disabilities. Information spans a multitude of professional journals (see Appendix A), many different (and unrelated) professional organizations, and sometimes obscure community publications. New journals that focus on the emerging intersection of the arts and special education professional fields are needed. Student assignment to an "arts rich classroom" (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999) with a knowledgeable arts/special education teacher should not be the "luck of the draw." All teachers should have access to arts/special education information.

Based on experiences and practices of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), our largest and oldest art education and special education professional organizations, two journals are necessary. One journal would focus on arts/special education research. The second journal would address innovative arts/special education teaching approaches and programs developing around the country. Without easy access, many arts/special education exemplars are missed. Arts/special education professional journals not only can make information easy to find, no small matter as noted below, but can also encourage new special education/arts teaching practices and research.

## **Journal Exemplars from the National Art Education Association and the Council for Exceptional Children**

*Intersections: Arts/Special Education* journals would be new, but can be established quickly. Special education and the visual and performing arts professions have developed a wealth of information about teaching practices and research and for many years have published both research and teaching professional journals. These peer reviewed journals are ongoing resources for the dissemination of innovative practices and promising discoveries. Through printed materials and the Internet, the journals have become accessible knowledge bases for both current research and best practices in each field.

The authors represent the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and have served as liaison between the organizations and on their journals' editorial boards. They draw on their extensive experience to describe journals from each organization. They also share practical information related to current NAEA and CEC publications.

### **Council for Exceptional Children Journals.**

The Council for Exceptional Children is the largest education association for professionals engaged in special education and gifted education. "CEC's mission is to improve, through excellence and advocacy, the education and quality of life for children and youth with exceptionalities and to enhance engagement of their families" (CEC, 2011). CEC offers its 30,000 international members two peer-reviewed journals, *Exceptional Children* and *Teaching Exceptional Children*. These journals address the wide-ranging interests of researchers, teachers, administrators, and therapists. Each journal serves a different purpose and appeals to different audiences within the professional community.

The research journal (*Exceptional Children*), published quarterly, is the premier scholarly journal in the field of special education. Over the past 75 years, *Exceptional Children* has established a strong reputation for publishing high quality scholarship. The journal's editors and editorial board members are selected from among a cadre of highly regarded special education researchers. Only five to ten percent of submitted manuscripts are accepted for

publication annually. Similar to other prominent educational research journals, *Exceptional Children* most frequently publishes descriptive and intervention studies, position papers and editorials on controversial issues, research and methodological reviews, and policy analyses related to exceptional learners (Mastropieri et al., 2009).

The research-to-practice journal *Teaching Exceptional Children* is published six times a year and features information teachers can readily use in their classrooms, including timely articles about specialized instructional technologies, strategies, and procedures. Both journals are available to CEC members in print versions and electronically through CEC's online journal gateway where members can search articles published in the past decade and download content in PDF format to computers or eBook readers. Both journals are also available to non-members through most academic libraries.

Prompted by priorities in federal legislation, the US Department of Education frequently supports research addressed in special education journals. For example, in the past decade the accountability provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), changes in the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (2004) related to Response to Intervention (RTI), and developments in the effectiveness of early reading practices have influenced instructional practices for students with disabilities (Mastropieri et al., 2009). As a consequence, most articles in CEC's journals address academic and social interventions, which is not surprising since special education instruction targets the development of critical academic, functional, and social skills of children and youth with disabilities.

Numerous other journals not published through CEC address a similar audience of researchers, teacher educators, teachers, therapists, administrators, and parents engaged in educating children and youth with exceptional learning needs (see Appendix A). Some of these journals address broad topics. Others focus more narrowly on professional issues relevant to specific groups of learners, such as students with autism, emotional and behavioral disorders, intellectual disabilities, or those who are blind or deaf. It is important to note, however, that topics related to the intersection of special education and arts education are relatively underrepresented in special education journals, as well as in arts education journals.

The infrequent publication of arts related articles in special education literature along with the dearth of special education articles within arts education literature posed a particular concern for Crockett (2013) in conducting an analysis of published journal articles addressing the intersection of special education and arts education published from 2002 to 2012. Search terms that would determine the types of articles published, topics of interest, and populations of students with exceptional learning needs proved to be a challenge to find in these publications. For example, searching the Academic Search Premier and ERIC First Search electronic databases with the combined terms *arts education, music, visual and media art, drama, dance and disabilities and schools*, identified only one article published since 2002 in *Exceptional Children* and none in the highly regarded *Journal of Special Education*. Similarly, only one article related to special education was identified in the *Arts Education Policy Review*. CEC's practitioner journal, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, published several relevant articles for classroom teachers focused on the integration of the arts in special and gifted education.

This initial scan of the literature located only 105 articles. Of these, 64 were professional commentaries or program descriptions, and 41 were original research studies. From this initial analysis of the publications addressing the intersection of arts education and special education, fewer than half (39 %) of what is known is research-based. Much more research and research-to-practice information is needed to support the preparation of teachers in both fields to meet the needs of exceptional learners included in today's schools; and, to demonstrate to funders, stakeholders, and policy-makers the efficacy of arts education for students with disabilities.

### **Founding a Journal: National Art Education Association Journals**

The National Art Education Association (NAEA) journals and NAEA issue groups' journals, as well as many other journals within and outside the field of art education, have transitioned to online journal publications, particularly since 2010.<sup>1</sup> For example, the *International Journal of Education Through Art (IJETA)* began as a print publication for its first

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<sup>1</sup> NAEA and NAEA affiliated online journals include: *CultureWork: A Periodic Broadside for Arts and Culture Workers* (<http://culturework.uoregon.edu/>), *International Journal of Education & the Arts* (<http://www.ijea.org/>), *International Journal of Education Through Art* (<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=121/>), *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* (<http://ussea.webhost.uits.arizona.edu/JCRAE.html>), *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* (<http://cstae.org/journal/>), *Studies in Art Education* (<http://www.arteducators.org/research/writing-for-naea>), *Visual Arts Research* (<http://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/var.html>), and *Visual Culture & Gender* (<http://vcg.emitto.net>).

seven volumes. However, IJETA editors recognized limitations of print journals, such as the cost to print the journal, especially if the journal included color images, and the time and costs with postal mailings, and expected that an electronic journal would increase readership. In 2012, InSEA (International Society for Education Through Art), an affiliate of NAEA, in partnership with Intellect published IJETA as an online journal. Other art education journals such as *Visual Arts Research* and *Studies in Art Education* offer subscription options for both print and electronic versions of the journal.

There are several elements to consider in founding two professional journals proposed in this paper: "Intersections: Arts and Special Education Research" (IASER) and "Intersections: Arts and Special Education Teaching/Innovative Programs" (IASETIP). The journal title is an important consideration as it is the identity and often will be referred to by the first part of the title before the colon and by its acronym. A mission statement for the journal is the basis of the call for papers to prospective authors and guides the peer-review decisions of papers to be included in each issue of the journal. The ISSN number is the standardized international code that is needed for the journal to be listed in search databases, whether a print or electronic serial. While database services can be contacted to request listing, the databases also contact journal editors to include established journals.

An advisory board, often comprised of elected officers of an organization, may elect or appoint the review board and editors. Typically review boards have a specified number of years of service and a staggered approach to adding new members so that a review board is not completely refreshed with new members all at one time. Tracking of the number of submissions and acceptance rates is important for credibility and should be provided in a letter that authors might use for their promotion and tenure dossiers. With online publications, the site can be designed with forums for readers to discuss the articles. Online journals can be designed with multi-modal and language translators for greater accessibility, and must be designed in compliance with ADA regulations.

The *Studies* description provides a good example of a succinct mission statement included in the publicity of the journal.

*Studies in Art Education*, is a quarterly journal that reports quantitative, qualitative, historical, and philosophical research in art education, including explorations of theory and practice in the areas of art production, art criticism, aesthetics, art history, human development, curriculum and instruction, and assessment. *Studies* also publishes reports of applicable research in related fields such as anthropology, education, psychology, philosophy, and sociology. (NAEA, 2014, para. 1)

Digital interfaces for searching a journal can provide information on the most cited and most assessed articles (Figure 1), which would be helpful to identify emerging perspectives in the intersections of art and special education.

The following description about JSTOR provides an overview of its goals in helping to establish the presence of a journal and to make it more accessible.

JSTOR is a shared digital library created in 1995 to help university and college libraries to free space on their shelves, save costs, and provide greater levels of access to more content than ever before. More generally, by digitizing content to high standards and supporting its long-term preservation, we also aim to help libraries and publishers of scholarly content transition their collections and publishing activities from print to digital operations. Our aim is to expand access to scholarly content around the world and to preserve it for future generations. We provide access to some or all of the content free-of-charge when we believe we can do so and still meet our long-term obligations. (JSTOR, 2013, para. 2)

Other considerations are free access versus subscription-based, funding support, designers and editing staff. NAEA publications have volunteer editorial, advisory, and review boards, and a small number of staff members do final editing and design of the journal, as well as publicity and dissemination of the journal. Additionally, storage and copyright issues need to be considered in founding and maintaining a journal.

In 2005, Karen Keifer-Boyd and Deborah Smith-Shank co-founded an international journal, *Visual Culture & Gender*, as an annual publication, and both serve as editors. There are eight volumes published from 2006 to the present (Figure 2). It is the first multimedia



online journal in the field of art education and has an established international review board of feminist art education scholars. The journal is included in the following databases: Proquest ARTbibliographies Modern; Feminist Periodicals; Wilson Database; and EBSCO.

Several NAEA and NAEA affiliated journals, such as the *International Journal of Education Through Art* and the *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, use an online manuscript submission process, which also accepts uploads of multimedia as part of the journal article, for online review and publication. Open Journal System (OJS) enables web-based peer review and submission that reduces time and cost in postal mail, or items lost in email or computer desktop disorganization. The process by which authors submit work and check the status of their manuscript is helpful to reduce the workload of email responses. Moreover, all interactions are recorded on the submission site for the journal, which provides much needed records of when manuscripts are submitted and reviewed. Also, reminders can be set up for automatic notification of due dates for both reviewers and authors.

We hope that this paper provides useful information to guide the founding of two Intersection journals. Questions to consider are whether online publications increase or limit who can access digital scholarship. Issues of bandwidth and access to current technologies, software and hardware to submit work for consideration, as well as support and information for file formatting and using the submission programs need to be included in the plans for founding new journals. Criteria for establishing the high quality of the journals include peer-review, rejection rates, tracking circulation and frequency of access, ADA and copyright compliance, upload and download speed, and searchable archives of past volumes of the journal.

### **If You Create It, They Will Come**

When a Special Needs Issues Group (SNAE) was approved and established at the National Art Education Association in 2000, a member shared, "Now I have a home. Before our group began, there was no place for me at conventions." Joseph Parsons, a Florida art teacher of adolescent students with severe behavior and learning problems, had been unable to find NAEA convention sessions and information that specifically addressed his art/special education teaching.

Since the SNAE group became part of NAEA, Parsons has not only attended SNAE's many and diverse convention presentations, from teaching practices to action research, but he has presented sessions about his own teaching. He proudly shows slides of his students' artwork as he describes his teaching methods. Parson's teaching suggestions range from classroom management to innovative art lessons, many using simple, locally available materials. Parsons also takes an active role in the Special Needs Issues Group (SNAE). He is the "keeper of Robert's Rules" and is now SNAE's secretary. Members benefit from Parson's professional "home" in SNAE at the National Art Education Association. For the past twelve years, SNAE's home at NAEA conventions has provided teaching and research presentations, business meetings devoted to art educators' special education concerns, and a growing network of supportive professionals.

Another arts and special education "home" has been established at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). CEC's new topic area, "Arts in Special Education," was created in 2011 and now receives and reviews convention arts proposals. Arts in Special Education topic area proposal readers have backgrounds in special education and arts education. Arts in Special Education presenters and those who attend their sessions also attend other arts/SED presentations. Like Parsons, they have found their professional home.

Prior to the creation of the "Arts in Special Education" topic area, arts presentations had to be submitted to other topic areas or to CEC divisions. Each has its own professional readers, current education directions, legislative concerns, and a limited number of convention time slots. Arts proposals too often were not seen as relevant to the division topic area, were not accepted, or were put on a wait-list. Those few arts proposals that did manage to squeak through this process were difficult to locate in the convention program because they were listed under non-art divisions or topic areas. Since 2011, arts presentations are easily found under "Arts in Special Education." CEC's Special Interest Group (SIG) for Teachers of the Arts provides still another opportunity to meet, network, and learn more about common interests.

## Recommendations

New journals are needed to tell our arts/special education research and teaching professional stories. Two editorial boards (one research, one teaching) should include representatives from art education, music, dance, and theatre education, related arts therapies, special education, and administration. Each journal should be published twice a year and include submissions from all of the arts. The “Intersections: Arts and Special Education Research” and “Intersections: Arts and Special Education Teaching/Innovative Programs” professional journals will encourage much needed peer-reviewed, published work and can provide a dedicated home for arts/special education research and exemplary teaching and programs. The two journals will enhance and enrich the emerging professional community brought together through the 2012 and 2013 VSA Intersections: Arts and Special Education Forums. These professional journals are a necessary next step to ensure that students with disabilities are included in arts programs and that their teachers have access to arts research and teacher education information.

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Figure 1: JSTOR

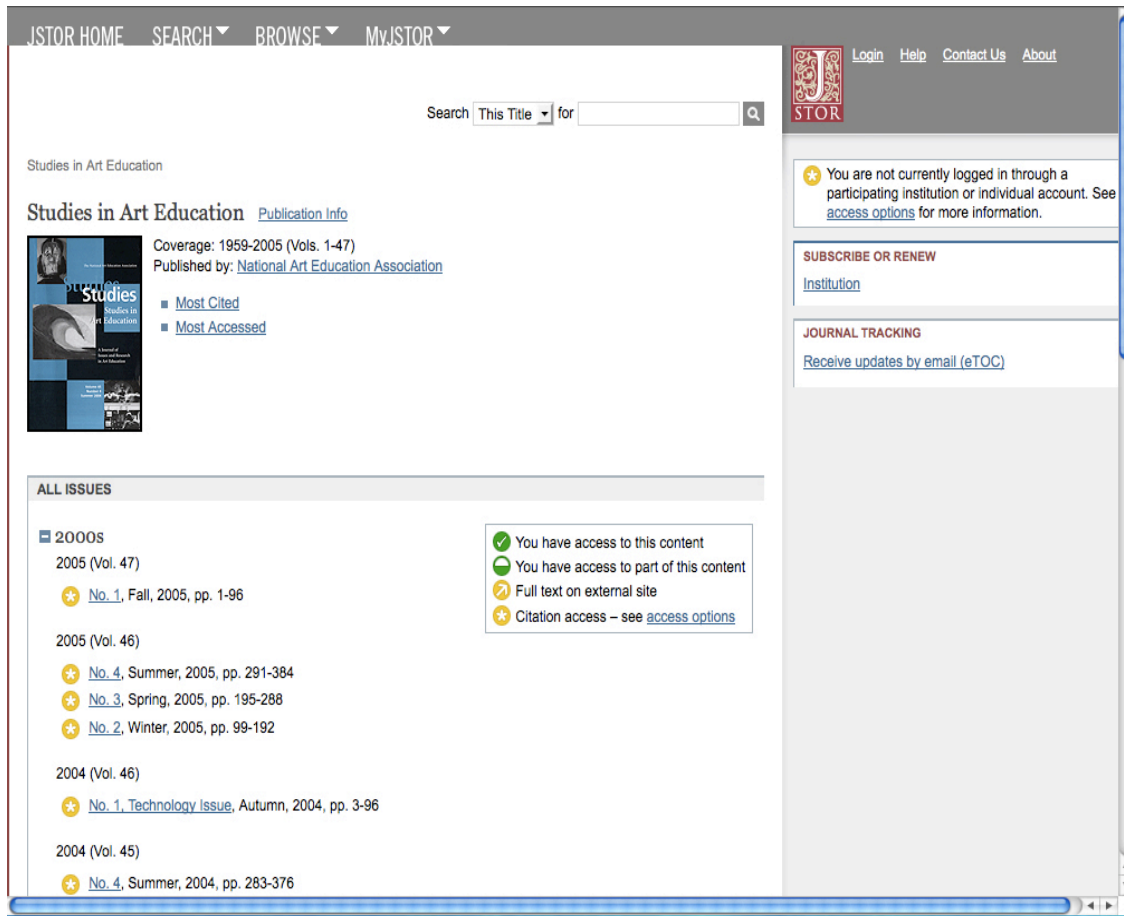


Figure 1: JSTOR, a digital library.

Figure 2. *Visual Culture & Gender*

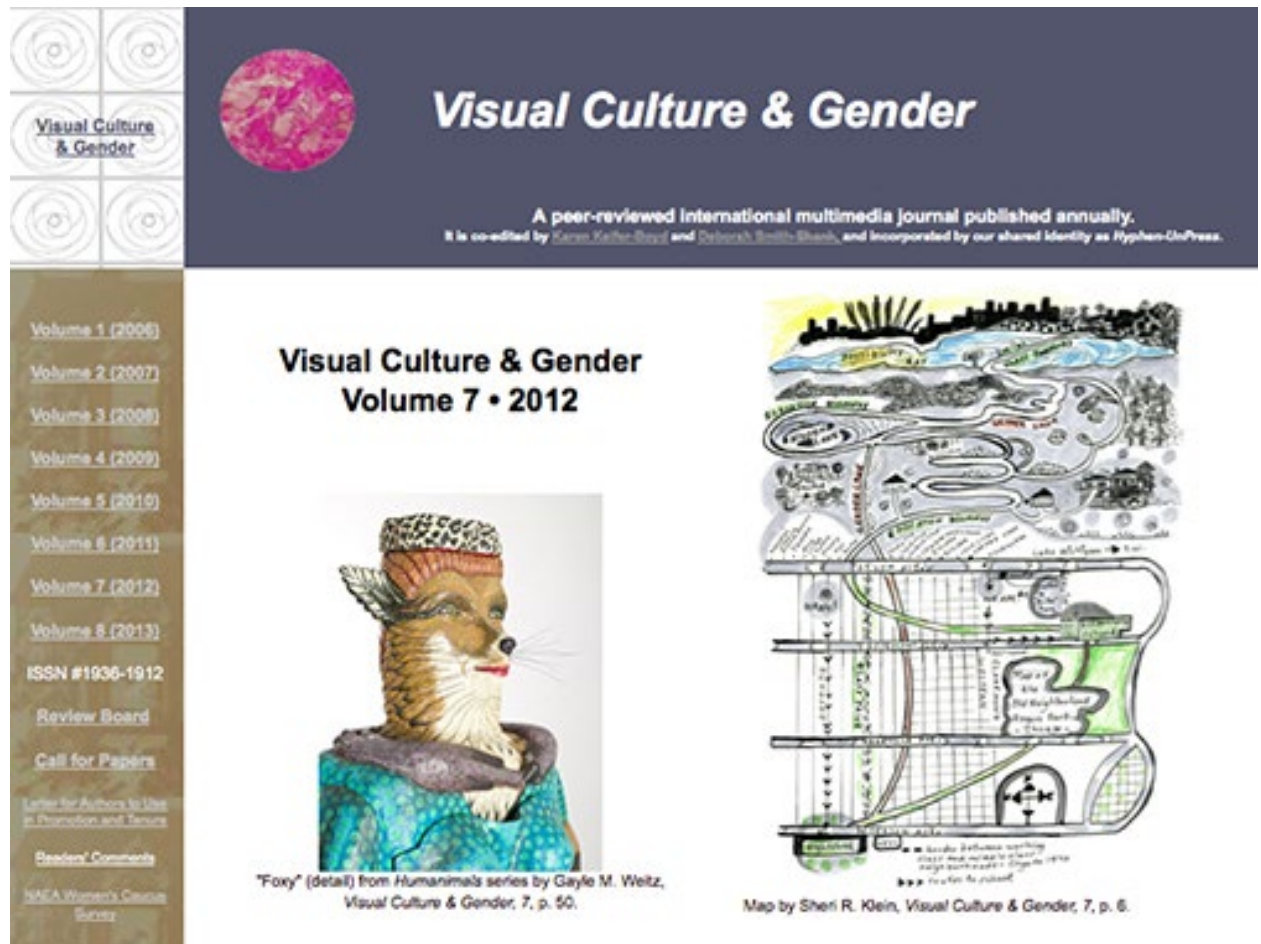


Figure 2. An example of an online journal cover of *Visual Culture & Gender* journal, with links to the mission statement, prior volumes, ISSN number, Review Board, Call for Papers, Letter for Authors to Use for Promotion & Tenure, Reader's Comments, and NAEA Women's Caucus

## Appendix A: A List of Special Education Journals<sup>2</sup> Key Special Education Journals

<http://classguides.lib.uconn.edu/content.php?pid=65298&sid=1310559>

- Advances in Learning and Behavioral Disabilities (Yearbook)
- Advances in Special Education
- American Annals of the Deaf
- American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- The Australasian Journal of Special Education
- British Journal of Special Education
- The British Journal of Visual Impairment
- Deafness & Education International
- Disability & Society
- Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities
- European Journal of Special Needs Education
- Exceptional Children
- Exceptionality
- Federal Outlook for Exceptional Children: Budget Considerations and CEC Recommendations
- Focus on Autism and other Developmental Disabilities
- Focus on Exceptional Children
- Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education
- Intervention in School and Clinic
- Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
- Journal of Behavioral Education
- Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education
- Journal of Early Intervention
- Journal of Early and Intensive Behavior Intervention
- Journal of Learning Disabilities
- Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs
- Journal of Special Education
- Journal of Special Education Technology
- The Journal of the International Association of Special Education
- Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools
- Learning Disability Quarterly: Journal of the Division for Children with Learning Disabilities
- RE:View Rehabilitation and Education for Blindness
- Remedial and Special Education
- State Special Education Outcomes
- Teacher Education and Special Education
- Teaching Exceptional Children
- Topics in Early Childhood Special Education
- Volta Review

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<sup>2</sup> Although extensive, please note that this is not a comprehensive list of special education journals.



# Exemplary Theatre Practices: Creating Barrier-Free Theatre

SALLY BAILEY

Inclusion of students with disabilities in drama classrooms, drama clubs, after-school activities, and community theatre with typically developing students is often best accomplished at the peer level. In a true inclusion setting, students with disabilities are accepted as equals rather than as second-class mascots who have been allowed to tag along. This kind of equal and respectful inclusion is necessary if students with disabilities are to develop self-worth and feel they belong to the whole school and community.

Full inclusion can happen successfully in drama classes and theatre productions. Dramatic activities focus on the expression of emotions and ideas, along with communication with others through body, voice, and imagination. Everyone has the opportunity to experience a full range of emotions and can learn to express those emotions appropriately through theatre games, improvisations, and acting out characters. While some individuals may have bodily or vocal challenges, everyone can access his or her imagination and learn to channel it into dramatic form. While other art forms can be practiced individually and in isolation, the social element inherent in theatre makes it an excellent venue for developing interactive skills and connections with others.

This paper outlines some of the basics of creating inclusive, barrier-free theatre for people of all abilities. The first section addresses the arts as a birthright, that is, the need that everyone has for participation in the arts, emphasizing inclusion. People with and without disabilities grow from working together, forming social bonds, serving as role models for each other, and co-creating artistic work.

The second section addresses the removal of attitudinal barriers that teachers and directors with no previous experience working with people with disabilities may need. Attitudinal adjustments will enable all participants to feel welcome and included in the group. As leaders, teachers may also need to model positive attitudes for students who have not had experience interacting with peers with disabilities.

The third section addresses foundational strategies and accommodations that open participation in dramatic activities and theatre performance to everyone. Foundational strategies and accommodations include setting clear ground rules and boundaries, remaining flexible, making adjustments in communication style, and utilizing 21<sup>st</sup> century technology. In addition, suggestions are provided for developing individualized accommodations.

The last section provides a basic introduction to creating original plays specifically for inclusive groups. When students are co-creators of a play (with appropriate guidance from drama teachers and directors), they focus on ideas that are exciting to them, invent dialogue they can articulate, and include interactions that are important to them.

### **The Arts as a Birthright**

#### **A Natural Part of Human Development**

The arts — drama, poetry, dance, visual arts, and music — are the birthright of every human being. Every child possesses natural abilities to sing, dance, draw, and act at various points early in development (Bailey, 2010). As soon as they are able to focus their eyes, within hours of birth, most typically developing infants start to imitate the actions of the people around them (Cozolino, 2006). Between the ages of two and two-and-a-half dramatic play begins. Children imitate the behaviors they have observed and improvise them, practicing interaction skills, asking “What if...?” and creating original stories through drama (Weininger, 1979, 1988). Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky believed that dramatic play was how children developed the emotional-regulation skills that make socialization and learning possible (Bodovra & Leong, 2006). He also believed the dialogue of dramatic play and the self-talk children acquire from it are necessary precursors, along with the practice of internal thought and other cognitive structures, for the development of abstract thinking (Vygotsky, 1994). If this is true, then drama is needed for young children to become thinking, reasoning, social human beings. If natural inclinations toward the arts are nurtured and scaffolded by adults in a child’s life, one or more of them may become a preferred channel for communication, exploration, and self-expression. Hence, we are all artists (Bailey, 1993; 2010). In 2011 the National Endowment for the Arts demonstrated support for this need for the arts in each person’s life by framing a national research agenda focused on the arts and human development (NEA, 2011).

Children with significant developmental disabilities, such as autism or intellectual disabilities, experience delayed developmental milestones and sometimes are isolated from potential playmates. They may miss dramatic play opportunities, which reinforce their need for drama and other arts experiences through school, recreation, and therapy sessions. In many cases arts experiences may be crucial for socio-emotional and cognitive growth (Brooke, 2006, 2009; Chasen, 2011; Gallo-Lopez & Rubin, 2012).

### **Role Theory**

Role Theory, first articulated by Jacob Moreno, is the ability to take on a role, even a role that a person has not played before, and explore it through action (Sternberg & Garcia, 2000). Moreno believed that all people are natural role players, role takers, and role creators. We start life with a few roles, and as we grow, we develop new ones through dramatic play and actual experiences. Once we know how to play a role, it becomes part of our role repertoire. The larger a role repertoire, the more flexible a person can be in terms of behavior. If roles are played in appropriate ways, then a person will develop healthy behaviors and relationships. Drama experiences assist actors as they are developing new roles for real life and expanding their role repertoires.

### **Barriers to the Arts**

Pablo Picasso famously said, “All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up” (Picasso, 2013). Unfortunately, we do not all have arts opportunities throughout our lives. Many children lose their connection to the arts because the majority of U.S. school systems do not incorporate them into their curricula (Parsad, Spiegelman, & Coopersmith, J., 2011; SNAAP, 2013, 2013). Reports on the dearth of arts education in public schools and after-school programs from the 1980’s through 2013 continue to caution that U.S. public school students are in danger of losing all arts instruction due to local, state, and federal education cuts (Descollonges, & Eisner, 2003; Fowler, 1996; Larson, 1997; NEA, 1988; Parsad, et al., 2011; SNAAP, 2012, 2013).

Another barrier to the arts is a belief held by some that only talented individuals, who are considered a select few even among the typically developing majority, have the ability to

participate in the arts as artists. The untalented masses may be able to watch and appreciate the arts, but not make it themselves (Eisner, 2002; Fowler, 1996; Larson, 1997). However, many leaders in arts education and research do not support this belief because they have experienced all their students with and without disabilities responding positively to the arts when given the opportunity (Bailey, 1993, 2010; Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Chasen, 2011; Eisner, 2002; Gallo-Lopez & Rubin, 2012; Lister, Tanguay, Snow, & D'Amico, 2009; Sarason, 1990; Snow, D'Amico, & Tanguay, 2003).

### **Benefits of Inclusion in the Arts**

Hamlet said that the purpose of theatre “is to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature” (Shakespeare, 1942, p. 1068). If he was correct, then theatre should reflect in the rehearsal room and on the stage the same diversity that exists in life.

The inclusion experience benefits all participants. Young artists with disabilities benefit from typically developing peers for continued artistic and socio-emotional growth (Bailey, 1993, 2010; Gallo-Lopez & Rubin, 2012). By the same token, typically developing artists learn they have more in common with peers with disabilities than they may have previously realized (Whitehurst & Howells, 2006). Theatre experiences often quickly establish a creative, safe, and supportive environment that embraces everyone (Bailey 1993, 2010; Gallo-Lopez & Rubin, 2012). All of us have dreams, worries, fears, and hopes. Genuine friendships are sometimes formed that continue outside rehearsal. In addition, typically developing actors are able to see actors with disabilities as creative artists with strengths and unique personalities. This happens organically through the regular action and interaction of a class or rehearsal process.

An adolescent who had the opportunity to work as a member of Pegasus, an inclusive company at Imagination Stage in Bethesda, MD, expressed enjoyment of his experiences at the time, “I really like these guys [the cast members who had disabilities], and I don’t get to do anything this creative in any other part of my life.” Seventeen years later when asked what being part of Pegasus meant to him in retrospect, he replied:

Pegasus taught me sooooo much. It taught me patience, it humbled me. I learned to look at the world through a new lens, to question stereotypes.

The improvisational aspect of the shows taught me to think on my feet and be flexible. Everyone has a contribution, something to share and is of value. It's hard to say how the skills I learned manifest in my current job/life beyond that I use them in my day to day dealing with clients and colleagues alike. One other big lesson I learned was to enjoy life, and laugh. Despite the occasional meltdown, I was always impressed with the overall joy in the room and sheer "fun" folks were having. (D. Fogel, personal communication, May, 2, 2011)

### **Removing Attitudinal Barriers about Disability**

The creation of accessible theatre experiences for students with disabilities – as in the creation of accessibility anywhere else — begins with a consideration of attitudes: those historically reflected in American society and those formed by individuals from personal experiences. Attitudes with respect to individuals with disabilities may be accepting or stigmatizing. Whether one's attitudes are fair and accepting or unfair and discriminating can only be determined after an individual honestly reflects on experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

### **Four Stages of Diversity: A Model for Looking at Inclusion**

Emma Van der Klift & Norman Kunc (1994) identified four possible stages to diversity with respect to the inclusion of people with disabilities in our society: (a) marginalization, (b) reform, (c) tolerance, and (d) value. Kunc, a social worker with severe cerebral palsy, a condition that begins at birth, is a true expert. He has studied the phenomenon through personal experience as well as from an academic perspective. Although identified twenty years ago, these stages continue to be applicable.

In the least diverse stage, **marginalization**, people who have disabilities are avoided and segregated from the rest of the community. The disability or difference does not need to be addressed because the person is not included with the majority of the community. For the most part, the American education system and cultural arts institutions have advanced from this stage. Recognition that everyone has the right to a free and appropriate public education and access to the arts and recreation is now required by law and accepted by most citizens (ADA, 1990; IDEA, 2004).

The next stage of diversity is **reform** in which people with disabilities are acknowledged, but need to be changed or rehabilitated in order to become as much like the majority community as possible. Kunc (Van der Klift & Kunc, 1994) described how emotionally debilitating his physical therapy, occupational therapy, and special education experiences were while he was in school. He never felt good enough, no matter how hard he worked, because he could never become “normal.” Most often in a reform-oriented situation, people with disabilities are expected to adjust to the rest of the world with minimum accommodations and adaptations. In many situations we have progressed beyond this stage as well.

This stage can be equated with the so-called medical model, which guides attitudes in many medical and mental health environs. Because of the need for assessment, adaptive equipment, medication, etc. by doctors, clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, and other professionals, people with disabilities are frequently perceived through the lens of the medical model. This approach identifies the disability as pathology within the person, who as a patient/client needs to be healed, cured, or somehow fixed (Band, Lindsay, Neelands, & Freakley, 2011; Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1999).

A more diverse worldview benevolently **tolerates** those who are different from the majority. This includes making accommodations for participants and including them, but treating them more or less as mascots who could not possibly understand, appreciate, or participate in the full experience. Mascot inclusion is often celebrated on TV news programs, newspaper feature stories, and YouTube clips when a student with a disability gets to participate on a sports team by sitting on the sidelines in uniform and finally getting to play in the last few minutes of a game that is either a guaranteed loss or a guaranteed win. Toleration inclusion can be found in arts programs, too. If someone sings off-key in the chorus, she can be told to stand on stage with others and mouth the words to the songs. If an actor can't memorize lines, he can be part of the crowd scenes in the play and murmur, “Rhubarb, rhubarb...” along with the other extras. All the adults and typically developing students pat themselves on the back for being so kind by allowing their special friends to participate. Whenever this happens, an opportunity for true inclusion has been missed.

The most diverse situation is when all people are **valued**, and everyone is accepted and welcomed as equal participants. This means leaders and educators involved in an arts program realize that creativity is an innate part of the human condition and that all of us, regardless of ability or disability, have unique ideas to contribute and the ability to express (or learn to express) feelings, thoughts, and ideas in an artistic medium. This is occurring more often as theatre educator-practitioners create inclusive theatre companies around the country, and research begins to show ways in which arts programs contribute to the development, education, and emotional growth of all students (Catterall, 2009; Catterall et al., 2012; Dunbar, 2008; Posner, Rothbart, Sheese, & Kieras, 2008).

### **Medical Model versus Social Model**

In an inclusive drama group accommodations are most effective and welcoming when made through the lens of the social model of disability. This approach identifies the impairment as a barrier within the environment and social milieu, not within the person. The disability is not the problem; the fault lies in society's failure to remove the barriers to full participation (Band, et al., 2011; Linker, 2013; Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1999). The teacher/director who makes accommodations from this perspective looks at the removal of barriers as a positive challenge, as opposed to a burden.

### **The Pygmalion Effect**

One positive attitudinal ingredient inclusive teachers can employ is the Pygmalion Effect (Rosenthal, 1994; Romain, 2010). In the 1960's, social psychologist Robert Rosenthal discovered that when a teacher believes a student can succeed, she communicates it to the student verbally, nonverbally, and through the amount of time she devotes to the student. From the spoken and unspoken expectations, the student develops a sense of self-efficacy ("I can do it because my teacher believes I can do it."), and applies herself to the work. The result is the student tends to achieve more success at the assigned task. This success, in turn, contributes to the development of stronger self-efficacy and continued hard work. The Pygmalion Effect applies to one student or a whole group of students. The motivation students feel and the level of intensity they apply to their work depends first and foremost on the teacher's attitude.

Thus, teachers must believe that their students have the potential to express themselves through drama. Students will absorb that belief and believe it, too. When referred to as actors, they will behave as actors. When told to behave “professionally,” they will.

### **Foundational Strategies for Inclusive Theatre Arts**

When drama teachers and theatre directors look for dramatic strengths and cultivate the imaginations of all their students, the joy of each participant’s humanity and unique talents are tapped and celebrated. Drama teachers and directors who do not have previous special education training may worry about their inexperience in making appropriate accommodations and, therefore, hesitate to encourage students with disabilities to join their classes and productions. This is a normal apprehension; however, making appropriate accommodations can be readily learned and will create a more diverse, rich learning environment for everyone.

Theatre teachers and directors are already skilled at accommodation whether they realize it or not. They tend to convey information through a more open and needs-based approach than a rigid, prescriptive one. Artistic communication is usually individualized for each actor, as each receives and processes direction differently. Many of the following inclusion practices lead to more effective teaching over all. Foundational strategies and accommodations include (a) setting clear rules and boundaries, (b) flexibility, (c) making adjustments in communication style, and (d) utilizing 21<sup>st</sup> century technology.

**Clear rules and boundaries.** The structure of a drama class or play rehearsal is different from that of a general academic classroom and therefore the rules of behavior change. In some ways, there is less structure: the space is usually open, without chairs and desks; the participants interact with each other and use their whole bodies to express themselves; and a display of emotions is expected in relation to the drama game, character, or scene being explored. In other ways, there is more structure: audience and observers sit in one area while actors are in another; the audience must be quiet, pay attention while watching a performance and be willing to provide constructive feedback after it; rules must be followed in drama games or they fall apart; and respectful behavior toward others is essential. Because of this, it is important to create behavioral limits and expectations that are clear at the start of the drama experience.



In the first drama session explain what the expectations are and generate a list of rules with the students. In the case of rehearsals for a play, a written contract that describes the behavior required of a dedicated actor is often the best procedure. When rules or contracts are broken, sit down with the actors to discuss what behaviors will create a more respectful environment for all. An individual interaction with the rule breaker may sometimes be more appropriate to have before a group discussion because the infraction may be out of his physical or cognitive control. Questions may need to be asked of parents, teachers, or other individuals who know the actor well to determine if the cause of the infraction is due to the need for an accommodation. The actors need to feel responsible for their interactions with each other so that an ensemble can develop. With practice, young actors will ultimately learn to be responsible for managing their own behaviors. The pay-off is having fun, developing friendships, and presenting a successful performance.

**Flexibility.** Flexibility is a universal quality found in all drama techniques. There are innumerable versions of drama games. Many games require no changes to be played successfully by everyone in a group. Others may be too complex, abstract, or physically active for certain students to play successfully. When this happens, another version of the same game that is simpler, more concrete, or has slightly different rules can be substituted without changing the targeted skill to be learned. For example, the mirror game is a common drama game used to teach observation skills, eye contact, body control, teamwork, and trust. Two actors face each other and take turns being the leader and the follower, as if the leader were looking in a mirror, with the ultimate goal of moving together as one. A student who has vision impairments would have difficulty seeing a partner and following his movements; however, there is a version in which the partners touch hands; this would allow both partners to follow each other more easily.

**Adjustments in communication style.** To fully include all students in a drama experience, information should be communicated multi-modally — orally, through visual examples and demonstrations, and in small chunks one step at a time. Many times when an activity is familiar, we forget all the separate components that have to be completed in order

to accomplish the whole. Before explaining a game, take the time to think through all the different steps involved. There may be more than you remember, or you may have combined two separate parts into one unit. When you think you have broken the activity down to all its individual components, check through once more to see if they are truly broken down enough.

Give actors directions in small chunks, demonstrating what the actors should do as they do it with you. For instance, to give directions for the mirror game say, "Find a partner." Find a partner, and wait until each actor in the group has found a partner. Then say, "Face your partner." Face your partner, and wait until each pair has faced each other. When the actors have done this, say, "I will be the leader and my partner will follow all of my movements. She will try to copy my movements so closely that she will look like my reflection in a mirror. Like this." Demonstrate with your partner. Then say, "The partner facing that side of the room [point to a wall in the room] will be the first leader and the partner facing the other side [point to the opposite wall] will be the first follower. Let's try this for about 15 seconds to make sure everyone understands." If they are able to correctly mirror each other, ask the actors to continue in their current roles and assure them that everyone will get to play both roles. If a duo is unclear about what to do, explain again with demonstration. When everyone understands, begin the game. Students who have difficulties with sequencing or short-term memory will be able to follow this kind of step-by-step approach. Even typically developing students can have difficulty remembering all the actions for a new game or be unable to remember them in the correct order, so they will benefit from this kind of presentation, too.

Present directions through positive statements, rather than negative ones: say what the actors should do instead of what they should not do. Negative statements often offer no alternative action to take, while a positive statement always provides a clear alternative action. For example, if an actor is standing too close to the edge of the stage, instead of saying, "Don't get so close to the edge of the stage," say, "Come over here with the rest of the group" or "Please, stand center stage."

Do not assume that all of the actors will understand theatre jargon or all idioms, figures of speech, or metaphors you use. Many people with and without disabilities are shy

about asking questions about the meaning of a new term or an odd phrase. Going over stage terminology may be review for some actors, but will be new information to others. Stop whenever you see someone's eyes glaze over as you are brilliantly (you think) explaining a character's motivations or the historical details of the time in which the play is set. Double check to make sure everyone understands what you are talking about. Actors are more apt to ask for an explanation when given the opening to ask by the leader.

**Technology.** In our technological age, there is equipment and media available to remove barriers and provide accommodations for inclusion of all students. Line memorization is one of the big concerns actors with and without disabilities have. It tends to be one theatre chore no one enjoys doing; however, line memorization becomes much easier if an early read-through of the script is audio-recorded, and the actors are given copies to listen to at home. In addition to hearing a scene as a unit of action, the actor is able to listen to his lines and the cues that come immediately before them. Once the lines become familiar through passive listening, the actor can press the pause button on the recorder right after a cue, fill in what he remembers as his line, and check it immediately by pressing the play button. Two actors who have a scene together can practice their lines over the phone between rehearsals or through instant messaging on their computers or iPads. Dances and blocking can be videotaped and watched at home.

Actors who have difficulty speaking may have an augmented communication device to provide audible words for them. The user types words on a keyboard and when the sentence is complete, presses a button. A mechanical voice speaks the words. Many of these devices can have lines recorded or programmed into them. When the actor hears his cue, he pushes a button and the machine delivers the line.

Actors who have difficulty writing can use an unobtrusive digital recorder to capture blocking during rehearsal or notes given by the director after a run through of the play. These can be replayed later and transcribed by a friend or parent or just listened to again. This technique may be just as useful for someone who just has horrible handwriting and can never

decode what he's written. Dragon and other voice-to-text applications can be downloaded onto smart phones or iPads. Recorded audio automatically turns into text.

**Identifying other types of accommodations.** The teacher/director does not have to be an expert on accommodations, particularly if he or she is willing to ask for help. Individuals who address environmental and programmatic barriers all the time often have developed very resourceful techniques for creating access. Asking the actor, his parents, or his special education teachers how he might better accomplish a task may provide an answer directly. Another source for specific accommodations might be the student's IEP (Individual Education Plan), which lists accommodations that the student needs in the classroom. If you are a teacher in the school, you have access to this document.

Some actors can have difficulty orienting in space, and as a result, are not able to remember their blocking. A solution can be to structure their entrances and exits to coincide with another actor who does not have spatial challenges. If Hank, who has spatial challenges, knows to exit every time Sue exits, and Sue knows to be sure Hank always exits with her, Hank will not get lost onstage. While lines are not permitted to be added to plays licensed from play publishers because of copyright laws, non-verbal communication – a look, an inclination of the head, a gesture – can serve as a visual cue.

Some actors may hesitate when it is time to make an entrance. Another actor entering at the same time can make sure the hesitant actor comes on with him. If the entrance must be made alone, the stage manager or her assistant can be by the entrance to "push" the actor out of the wings. One actor, who was making his entrances too slowly, was quietly reminded by the stage manager to "walk like you do at Special Olympics competitions." This timely reminder always got him moving at the correct pace.

There are clever ways to help actors who have trouble with lines. A detective interrogating a criminal could have his questions written on his detective's pad. A newspaper or TV interviewer could use a clipboard or notebook to list questions. Doctors, scientists, or other professional characters could have lines, cues, or questions written on their clipboard.

To make this kind of adaptation believable the actor needs to practice using the prop as a memory enhancer, instead of reading everything directly off the clipboard. Having this kind of prop often relieves the anxiety actors have and provides them with something to manipulate in character.

Non-traditional casting can be applied to disabilities as much as it can to ethnicity and race. Actors who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices do not have to be cast in roles of invalids who need wheelchairs. Dorothy could potentially roll down the Yellow Brick Road. By the same token, there is nothing wrong with incorporating a wheelchair into a play as a throne that moves, a carriage, ambulance, cab, or other conveyance. With a small wagon attached to the back of his motorized wheelchair an actor in a modern version of *Cinderella* drove Cindy to the ball. A walker can become a medical cart, a maid's cleaning wagon, or the butler's cocktail cart. Actors enjoy creatively transforming their adaptive devices into integral aspects of the play, and the audience does, too.

Few resources are available in print about adaptive or inclusive theatre. The book *Barrier-Free Theatre: Including Everyone in Theatre Arts* (Bailey, 2010) is one resource for finding ideas for theatre accommodations.

### **Developing Original Plays for Inclusive Groups**

Published plays written by non-disabled playwrights do not always lend themselves to actors who have disabilities. Sometimes it becomes necessary to create the script around the specific talents, strengths, and interests of the actors in the company. Great playwrights throughout history have used this approach. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and other ancient Greek playwrights wrote for amateur actors in the city of Athens who performed their plays as part of the community festivals in honor of the god Dionysus (Brockett, 1968). William Shakespeare wrote for members of The Lord Chamberlain's Men, his acting company in Elizabethan England, as did Moliere for his acting company in 17<sup>th</sup> century France (Brockett, 1968).

Involving actors in the creation of a play immerses them in all aspects of theatre from the development of characters, dialogue, and structure of the play to its implementation on stage. This provides a deep learning experience in all aspects of theatre. As Hamlet would say,

you can “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action” (Shakespeare, 1942, p. 1068) in a very organic way.

The best way to start this process is to let ideas for the play come from the actors. A brainstorming session will allow the actors to contribute all the ideas they think would be exciting for a play. Re-creating a movie or show on television is not a good idea, because they are often copyrighted and their already established plot and characters will restrict the group’s creativity when they begin to improvise. However, those shows are often the first suggestions made by young actors because that is what they are exposed to most frequently. Even though using those ideas would not be optimum material, write every suggestion down on a large piece of paper or white board so everyone feels heard. Often a theme develops when the ideas are seen as a group. The actors may be drawn to melodramas, mysteries, or thrillers. The leader can point out what genre categories are represented and propose a play based on the most popular, such as a crime story, a hospital drama, a superhero adventure, or a horror spoof. Another option is to focus on character types that actors are interested in portraying. Developing stories from characters in conflict is the basis of all drama.

If the suggestions seem far ranging and consensus looks difficult, take an interest vote. Allow every person to vote for all the ideas he or she likes. Tally the votes and see which four or five have the most votes. These will be the “hot” ideas. There may be a way to combine two or three of them and satisfy most, if not all, of the actors. For instance, scientists, spies, and zombies, came together to become *Scientific Blunders or Don’t Try This Experiment at Home*, a science fiction play in which drinking the wrong chemical formula almost led to the Zombie Apocalypse. Pirates, ninjas, mermaids, and dragons became *High Tide Troubles*, an island adventure in which stranded pirates joined forces with the native ninjas and mermaids to keep the dragons that lived in the volcano from blowing up the island. Interest in soap operas, romance, and hospitals became *Heart Beat*, a melodrama in which the romantic entanglements of doctors and nurses put their patients’ lives at risk.

Once the topic is chosen, brainstorming can continue about potential characters, conflicts they might have, locations where the play or specific scenes might take place, and

other details that the director can use to create improvisational situations. If a group is highly verbal, recording improvisations can be helpful. Scenes with wonderful lines can be transcribed and incorporated into the script. Character situations and relationships that develop in improvisations suggest ideas for conflicts, plot points, and character motivations or for further improvisational development.

Whether the teacher/director is recording improvisations or just taking notes, at some point the major conflict must be chosen so characters in a specific storyline can be developed. After experiencing different kinds of characters through participating in the improvisations, the actors will have ideas about the kind of role they would like to have in the play. Giving actors a first, second, and third choice of character allows them to have a say in casting and provides the director with leeway in balancing the roles. A Western with all heroes or all villains will not work as well as one with good guys and bad guys. Some actors are more flexible than others and will say, "I'm open. I'll play anything." Other actors have their hearts set on specific roles. The director will want to cast actors in roles that provide the appropriate challenge for his/her current artistic development. Giving the actors choice is important, but ultimately the director will make the final decision.

Casting the play before beginning the writing process is very helpful. The playwright (who may be the director or may be different company member) can cast actors in groups with a balance of skills and strengths to accommodate for specific weaknesses. Actors with strong concentration and a good memory for movement can assist actors who are easily distracted or spatially challenged. Actors good at memorization can have more lines, and they can be given lines that cue actors who are not as good at memorization under the guise of asking them questions or issuing commands. Special talents and abilities can be included, such as playing an instrument, skating, dancing, singing, juggling, or doing pratfalls.

In performance an actor strong in improvisation skills can save a scene if the other actors forget their lines by getting the necessary information out, asking questions, or making comments that remind the other actors what they were supposed to say or do. Whether written in the script or improvised, the actor who is motivating the response needs to phrase cues in a

positive manner so the receiving actor understands what to do. For instance, instead of saying “Don’t go in there!” say, “Stay out here with me! I’m scared!” The receiving actor has been given a specific action to take and a motivation for it: in this case, to protect and comfort the motivating actor.

Lines can be created that each actor is able to articulate, avoiding speech challenges. If a word is difficult to pronounce or a phrase is too long to remember, it can be changed. When an actor is difficult to understand because of volume level or speech difficulties, adjustments can be made in the script. For instance, an actor who has difficulties with articulation could play a character who speaks a foreign language and has a translator. In *Prometheus through Time* the prophetess Cassandra, who was very shy in real life, whispered her lines to her Oracle, then her Oracle spoke for her.

Another scripted option for handling actors who are difficult to understand is to write the lines so a different character repeats key words or phrases. This way the audience knows what has just been said. For instance, if one character is accused of stealing a diamond, he might say, “I didn’t do it!” and the police inspector might respond, “You didn’t do it? Do you expect me to believe that?” This line repetition technique can be used subtly. If the actor with verbal challenges says, “I’m tired. I’m going to sleep,” the other actor might respond, “If I’m going to stay awake all night watching these cows, you are going to stay awake with me.” Even though the exact line is not repeated, the meaning comes across in context.

Video or audio clips could be integrated into the play. Whatever is recorded will not need to be remembered during the performance; it is permanently set. While lines will need to be learned for the recording session, they will not need to be remembered or rehearsed after the shoot. If an actor is having difficulty with lines, a scene can be shot multiple times until a take is just right.

Memorization of lines and the understanding of characters’ motivation are often easier in an original script because the actors have created the characters and dialogue themselves during the script development process. In many ways script development becomes the exploratory part of the rehearsal process. By the time the show is being blocked, the actors already have a clear idea of who their characters are.



A different kind of pride results when actors create their own play from initial idea to final performance. The suggestions above are just a few of the many ways a play can be created to highlight the strengths of a group while mitigating their weaknesses. See *Barrier-Free Theatre* (Bailey, 2010) for more suggestions for devising and writing inclusive plays.

### **Conclusion**

The dramatic arts, processes and products, should not be reserved for an elite few nor experienced only by members of society who do not have disabilities. Drama is the birthright of every human being and a natural form of exploration and learning. Narrative, character, dialogue, and imagination are intrinsic to the way all humans think and function. Participating in the arts invites people with disabilities to develop the full range of their social and emotional abilities (Bailey, 2010; Chasen, 2011; Gallo-Lopez & Rubin, 2012). They gain confidence and self-efficacy, practice for real life situations, and make connections with others of all backgrounds (Bailey, 2010; Chasen, 2011; Gallo-Lopez & Rubin, 2012). Inclusive theatre is a powerful tool for contributing to a democratic and diverse society. Every city and town should have at least one barrier-free theatre program, because inclusive theatre experiences are in the vanguard of creating a society in which everyone is equal and valued.

### **A Sample of Organizations with Inclusive Companies**

Actual Lives Austin, 3710 Cedar Street, Suite 7; Austin, TX 78705.

Website: <http://www.actualives.org/index.htm>

ArtStream, 620 Pershing Drive; Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Website: <https://www.art-stream.org>

Awareness Theatre Company, Burlington, VT.

Website: <http://www.vsavt.org/public-awareness/awareness-theater-company/>

Barrier-Free Theatre, a joint project of the City of Manhattan Parks and Recreation Department, 1101 Poyntz Avenue; Manhattan, KS 66502; the Manhattan Arts Center, 1520 Poyntz Avenue; Manhattan, KS 66502; and the Drama Therapy Program, Kansas State University; 109 McCain; Manhattan, KS 66506.

Dionysus Theatre, 5300 N. Braeswood #226; Houston, Texas 77096.

Website: <http://dionysustheatre.org/pages/home.asp>

Friendship Theatre, City of Federal Way Parks and Recreation Department; Federal Way, WA.

Website: <http://itallhappenshere.org/recreationinclusion.html>

Imagination Stage, 4908 Auburn Avenue; Bethesda, Maryland 20814.

Website: [www.imaginationstage.org](http://www.imaginationstage.org).

Interact Theatre, Colonial Warehouse Building, 212 Third Avenue North, Suite 140;

Minneapolis, MN 55401. Website: <http://www.interactcenter.com>

Magic Moments, P.O. Box 97; Littleton, CO 80160.

Website: <http://www.magicmomentsinc.org>

Open Circle Theatre, 500 King Farm Blvd., #102; Rockville, MD 20850.

Website: <http://www.opencircletheatre.org>

Positive Action Community Theatre, 535 Encinitas Blvd., Suite 101; Encinitas, CA. 92024

Website: <http://www.pacthouse.org>.

Short Center Repertory Company, Sacramento, CA.

Website: <http://ddso.org/programs/short-center-repertory-scr/>

Special Gifts Theatre, P.O. Box 2231; Northbrook, IL 60065

Website: <http://specialgiftstheatre.org>

Stone Belt Community Playback Troup, 550 South Adams Street; Bloomington, IN.47403.

Website: <http://www.stonebelt.org/>

True Story Project, Visible Theatre, NYC, NY. Website: <http://www.visibletheatre.org>

Unified Theatre, Hartford, CT. Website: [www.unifiedtheatre.org](http://www.unifiedtheatre.org).

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# Visual Theatre: Building a Bridge for Student Success

TIM MCCARTY

Quest Visual Theatre staff and artists are committed to the creation, production, facilitation, and presentation of inclusive visual theatre. The company's education program, TheatreBridge, focuses on the use of visual theatre to enhance learning readiness and literacy skills in all students, but particularly students who are struggling in school and frustrated by reading and writing. From 2010 to 2014, Quest company members conducted research on the impact of its arts integration, visual theatre approach with Deaf and hard-of-hearing students attending the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) in Columbia, Maryland. They also provided professional development to educators across the United States and around the world as part of the TheatreBridge Program. Quest staff and artists regularly conduct TheatreBridge residencies in schools and communities nationally and internationally.

This paper provides an overview of the TheatreBridge program, with an explanation of visual theatre and its application to the classroom. The paper also provides insight to TheatreBridge's assessment tools and research findings.

## What is Visual Theatre?

Movement is the central organizing principle in visual theatre. Performers communicate information, relationships, and emotions primarily through movement, such as traditional mime, various forms of dance, sign language, gesture, and circus arts. Other visual theatre choices include puppetry and masks. Visual theatre is not necessarily silent or non-verbal. It may contain spoken word, music, or other sound. It also may contain multimedia elements such as video or projections. However, the essential meaning of any visual theatre piece transpires through its visual vernacular.

Imagine that you are watching a movie and you turn off the sound. If you can follow the action and the visual elements of the movie, that gives you an idea of visual theatre. When the Quest company members are building a new show, the director and ensemble will often ask this question about a scene that they created, "Does it read?" This means, can an audience comprehend the scene and its' visual base.

Some examples of well-known professional companies that create and perform visual theatre include: Cirque du Soliel, Blue Man Group, Pilobolus Dance Theatre and Bill Irwin. The Academy Award winning movie, "The Artist," is a film based largely on visual theatre principles.

### **A Rationale for Visual Theatre in the Classroom**

TheatreBridge builds upon the ever-growing body of research that demonstrates the benefits of integrating the arts into education. The Arts Education Partnership publication *Champions of Change* provided a valuable review of literature that convincingly draws the connection between the arts and student success. For Quest's TheatreBridge purposes, *Champions for Change* noted that one of the "critical research findings" was that the arts effectively "levels the playing field" for disadvantaged students. (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999, p. 8).

TheatreBridge particularly draws upon research that explores links between arts and literacy. In a study of how visualization and theatre instructional strategies impacted reading comprehension skills of fourth graders with cognitive disabilities, Lowell (2013) suggested that students "significantly increased" their reading comprehension. In a study of reluctant readers, Wilhelm (1995) discovered that students who use art to visualize a story they are reading enjoy the reading and begin to use and play with story words. Crumpler and Schneider (2002) explored the connections between reading, writing and theatre with first, second and third graders. After reading Maurice Sendak's book "Where the Wild Things Are," (1963) students assumed roles from the story and acted out the book. Then, the students recalled their reading and performance experiences to write about things that interested them from the story. This enabled students to experience the story from a variety of perspectives and employ a variety of academic skills (reading, performing, writing), which led to a greater understanding of the story and an increase in the sophistication of their writing.

Over the last four years, TheatreBridge, has focused research on the following goals:

1. Increase opportunities for Deaf and hard-of-hearing elementary and middle school students to engage in standards-based arts education in the core curriculum.

2. Strengthen standards-based arts instruction for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students in elementary and middle grades.
3. Improve the academic performance and literacy skills for Deaf and hard-of-hearing children in those grades.

The Maryland School for the Deaf has served as a valuable laboratory for TheatreBridge's research. The Quest staff and MSD teachers, aides, administrators, parents, and students have individually and collectively explored elements of visual theatre in the classroom.

### **Building Culturally Appropriate Learning Environments**

Quest's TheatreBridge Program encourages teachers to create supportive, visually and kinesthetically based environments that are culturally appropriate for students with communication challenges.

The reading level of Deaf people of all ages in the United States remains below the 4<sup>th</sup>-grade level (Morere, 2011). A variety of factors contribute to the Deaf and hard-of-hearing student's ability to read and write well. Ninety percent of children who are Deaf are born to hearing parents who often do not discover their child's deafness until they are nearly one year old (Azbel, 2004). These parents typically have no experience with or knowledge of deafness, and they face significant challenges in communicating with and raising their Deaf child. Their children often do not develop a foundation in a primary language during their critical early months and years, and they are not ready to learn to read and write by kindergarten. Even for a child who enters school fluent in signed communication at an age-appropriate level, the process of learning to read and write English, which is essentially a foreign language to the child, is daunting. The lost time during a child's formative years combined with the loss of information from auditory input can contribute to failure for many Deaf and hard of hearing students (Mayberry 2002). Research indicates that classroom teachers continue to face challenges in developing and utilizing instructional strategies that lead to significant and lasting improvement in the literacy skills of Deaf and hard of hearing students (McAnally, Rose & Quigley, 1999; Stewart & Kluwin, 2001).



Visual theatre allows students with limited language skills to develop their communication skills without the barrier that language often presents. In visual theatre, the student's body becomes the primary means of communication to the audience. Through visual theatre games and exercises, students develop their abilities to use imagination, experiences, ideas, and information to express themselves physically and visually.

It may seem ironic that stripping away language can foster student growth in communication. However, when teachers incorporate a visual theatre approach in their classrooms, students with varying levels of language competency have opportunities to significantly contribute to the creative and critiquing process. Too often when answering questions or working in small groups, those students who have a greater facility for signed or spoken language dominate the conversation, frequently leaving out students with weaker language and communication skills. A visual theatre approach in the classroom provides all students with opportunities to meaningfully engage in the classroom. Through this process of visual learning and visual engagement, all students enhance their observation, analytical, creative, and expressive skills. Students with weak communication skills significantly grow in their ability to absorb, process and express ideas. Through teacher logs and recorded interviews, TheatreBridge teachers note that their students gain confidence, feel engaged in their education, and are enthusiastic about the learning process. TheatreBridge teachers also note students begin to value each other and recognize each other's contributions to the creative and learning environment.

### **Visual Theatre Games**

Theatre games and exercises are a common tool that teachers and directors use in their classes and rehearsals to develop an actor's performance skills and a sense of ensemble in a group. Most theatre games have an improvisational base. This means that the instructor establishes the rules or circumstances of a game. Then the actors, using the given rules or circumstances, are free to create characters, dialogue and scenes. Theatre teachers use games to achieve curricular goals while directors use games to meet the needs of a particular production of a play.

Like all theatre training, teachers and directors use visual theatre games and exercises to develop students' creative and expressive skills. Visual theatre games should particularly focus on enhancing the actor's tools:

- Body
- Imagination
- Experience

The body is the primary tool in visual theatre. Teachers, therefore, must invest time and care to develop this essential tool. Students must learn how to move effectively in space and to effectively move each part of their bodies. A visual theatre actor must have the ability to call upon parts of his or her body to accurately interpret or express images, characters, emotions, and settings. It is through this movement or the images created by an actor's body or group of actors' bodies, that an audience must read and interpret a scene or sequence. Therefore, when an actor can effectively utilize his or her body, audience members more readily understand what the actor or actors are trying to express. This ability to communicate effectively and with clarity can be challenging, especially with students who are accustomed to people not understanding them. Empowerment of students to clearly express themselves visually is, in fact, invaluable for building student success.

However, the ability to move effectively and accurately is not enough to be a good actor. Actors must convey character, ideas, feelings, and places. Effective visual theatre games encourage students to use their imagination and experiences to accurately express a specific character, particular ideas, defined feelings, and certain places. Often, students have not been encouraged to express themselves lack the ability to do so. They need time, many opportunities, and constructive feedback to play with ways of creating and expressing themselves visually, and learn that their ideas are interesting.

With TheatreBridge, Quest staff and artists encourage teachers to weave theatre games into the classroom throughout the school year. Sometimes, the games are to focus on students' development of acting or communication skills. However, the key to building student success is integrating games into the curriculum so that students gain a greater understanding of course content. The games also become a valuable tool for assessment of student learning.

## Visual Theatre Game Samples

Game outlines included in this paper appear in a “script” format to provide detailed information (See figures 1 and 2). The Quest Visual Theatre TheatreBridge webpage (<http://www.questvisualtheatre.org/outreach-education/theatrebridge/>) includes these and over 60 visual theatre games. These games were originally part of the Maryland Artist Teacher Institute study guide, which also appears on the Quest website.

**Environments game.** The outline for Environments presents the game in its basic format (see Figure 1). In teacher and teaching artist training, the Quest staff encourages participants to brainstorm ways of adapting each game to the classroom setting. TheatreBridge classroom teachers have used Environments in a number of ways. Some have used it in its basic form to work on the learning readiness skills listed at the top of the game outline.

Some teachers have adapted the game to meet science standards and replaced the environments with weather conditions such as sun, rain, wind, sleet, and snow. To help students gain a greater understanding of precipitation, teachers have actually spritzed students with water sprays to experience rain and pelted them with crushed ice while they moved through sleet. Teachers take photos of students performing in each weather condition. Then, students draft sentences to match each photo, and students and teachers edit the sentences and create a Power Point slide show about weather. Teachers project the slide show and the students take turns signing or speaking the sentences and describe the weather condition.

In English Language Arts (ELA), teachers change the environments to match settings of a story that they are reading. Another ELA approach is to ask students to assume the role of one of the characters in a story they are reading. Students identify traits for their character, and each student must maintain his or her commitment to the character throughout all of the environments given by the teacher. Each student must move in each environment as his or her character would and interact with other characters in a way that is appropriate for the story and the environment. After playing Environments, the teacher asks the students to share what they have learned about their character and other characters through the game experience.

**Big/Little game.** In addition to the concepts of size, Big/Little is an excellent game to help students understand numbers, counting, and value (see Figure 2). Teachers can lead

students in counting by using their fingers, using flash cards with Arabic numbers, or even Roman numerals. Switching around with the numbers helps students attend to the sequence and understand “greater than” or “less than.”

Some TheatreBridge teachers divide students into groups and assign emotions to each group. The teacher becomes a conductor leading an emotional symphony - the higher the number, the higher the intensity of the emotions. Students and teachers also can add adjectives to their emotions or even replace their root word with a more appropriate word. For example:

Tired

Very Tired

Extremely Tired

Exhausted

### **Benefits of Visual Theatre Games**

With visual theatre games, students play first according to rules provided by their teacher. Then, they begin to apply that play to important curricular goals and outcomes. The kinesthetic and intellectual play, along with accompanying discussions, photos of student visual theatre work, and written assignments, engages students in their educational process. Students become familiar with the curricular content in various forms. They begin to experience success in the classroom, and through this success, students begin to build confidence. This confidence is vital for many students who experience frustration and failure in the classroom.

### **Tableau**

Quest trainers encourage teachers to spiral a variety of visual theatre games into their curriculum throughout the year, enabling students to develop their visual theatre, communication, interpersonal and intellectual skills. However, the visual theatre technique that plays a critical role in student success in the TheatreBridge Program is the tableau.

Tableau is a traditional theatre technique used in many forms of theatre all around the world. In a tableau, actors create a frozen image or still picture with their bodies. A group can use the tableau to represent something that they read, a photo or painting that they have

studied or an idea that they want to express. Because there is no movement, a tableau helps students identify one or two important ideas and then express those ideas succinctly and with clarity.

Creation and assessment of tableaus in the classroom touch upon a broad range of learning and knowledge skills. Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domain (Clark, 2013) provides an ideal framework for understanding how the tableau process works (see Figure 3).

TheatreBridge teachers often ask their students to create a tableau that visually represents something that they read in class. To successfully create their tableaus, the students must utilize all levels of Blooms' taxonomy.

*Remembering:* The students must remember the details of the story.

*Understanding:* Students must understand the story to plan their tableaus.

*Applying:* Students use details of the story that they then apply to the creation of their tableaus.

*Analyzing:* After the students create their first draft, they look critically at photos that the teacher has taken of their tableaus.

*Evaluating:* The students critique their work.

*Creating:* Based upon their self-critique, the students revise their tableaus and share them with their peers. Their creation of the tableau is not a replication of the story. It is their visual interpretation of the story.

The tableau sharing, feedback, and revision process offers students several opportunities to explore the full range of Bloom's Taxonomy.

### **The Sharing Process**

When creating works like tableaus, students should share their work with peers. Sharing adds some tension to the process. Knowing they are creating something that is then shared with others encourages students to think about audience acceptance in the creative process. (Hattie, 2008).

When first using the sharing process, teachers should clarify roles. Students who are presenting their work are actors who must commit themselves to the work or performances.

Those students who are observing the work are audience members who will provide constructive feedback.

Following the tableau sharing, performers stand in a line in front of the audience. The performer's job is to actively listen to feedback, and he or she is not permitted to respond or explain. If the performers/students are allowed to respond, they are not listening. Instead, they are preparing their responses to feedback when they should be attending to audience critique.

Audience members must give specific, concrete analysis of the work performed. "I like it, it was funny, it was good," is not an acceptable feedback statement. Audience members must make statements and use descriptive evidence to support those statements. For example, "I thought the focus was very clear because everyone was looking at Robert." "I thought the tableau clearly showed that everyone was sad because each actor frowned and their shoulders slumped."

Remaining attentive during the feedback process helps students accept criticism. After receiving feedback, performing students may choose to ignore the feedback or incorporate it into their presentations during their next draft. TheatreBridge staff members consider self-evaluation and peer critique as essential to developing students' collaborative skills. This collaborative approach is a valuable part of the students' overall learning process.

### **Developing Tableau Skills**

Quest's website includes a variety of visual theatre games that help students develop their skills to create a tableau. The "freeze" part of the Environments game is the first step in learning tableau. Many students are not aware of their bodies and how they move or control their bodies. Taking the time to develop the ability to create interesting pictures as an individual and as a group is an important part of the tableau process. When creating interesting tableaus students must:

- Commit their entire body to the picture and the picture's intent
- Have a clear focal point
- Use a variety of levels

One of the standard games that Quest artists use to teach tableau is "1, 2, 3" (see Figure 4). Teachers have a variety of options in how they might apply tableau in the classroom. Creating

tableaus is one of the activities that MSD teachers and students effectively incorporate into their classes. Tableaus, emphasizing position, motion, expression, and collaboration, are woven into a myriad of lesson plans in various subjects that form MSD's core curriculum. For example, in a second grade MSD class, students learn about nature's life cycles and specifically study the life cycle of a frog. Using toys, puppets and flashcards, the teacher introduces students to vocabulary, such as, "frog, tadpole, eggs." The students and teacher each have an opportunity to manipulate the objects and discuss what they know about each vocabulary word. Then the class moves to a different section of the room where the teacher shows a brief animated film of the frog's life cycle. Students discuss the film, and the teacher assists them in using the vocabulary they have just learned. Finally, the teacher projects a series of pictures depicting the frog's life cycle, and the students create a tableau for each picture. The teacher takes a photo of each tableau, reflecting the students' interpretation of each picture. Teachers and students use these photos in a number of ways throughout the unit. Sometimes the teacher projects the picture and the students explain what is happening. Sometimes the teacher and students create sentences to caption their photos. The process, most importantly, enables students to develop a deeper understanding of the information about a frog's life cycle because of the active way learning takes place.

MSD teachers have been pleased with how TheatreBridge and the use of tableaus are working in the classroom. Sixth-year teacher Shannon Negussie, author of the frog cycle lesson plan, indicated "linking theatre games to the curriculum helps the students learn and retain information,"

### **TheatreBridge Lesson Plans**

TheatreBridge teachers create theatre-in-education (TIE) lesson plans using a template that connects Theatre Arts standards to other subject matter standards. See Figure 5 for a sample lesson plan. More lesson plans are available on the Quest website.

Maginnis' lesson plan uses visual theatre (fabric play) to allow students the opportunity to develop and explore character. Student characters begin to interact and a story emerges. Here the visual theatre serves as the first draft of a story that students create by consensus.

The plan enables students to complete an English Language Arts (ELA) standard as well as a Theatre Arts standard. For students struggling with written language, satisfying a basic ELA standard can be difficult. Through the use of fabric, visual theatre, creative play, brainstorming, discussion, and story map, Maginnis provides an instructional framework for creating and identifying the elements of a story. In creating their story, students, using the fabric silently, develop a character. Through discussion, students identify and give descriptors for their characters and brainstorm ideas for their story. In writing, students map their story and write their own scenes for the story. Then, students “read aloud” the scenes they wrote. Students can continue to redraft their scenes by both performing the scenes and by writing and rewriting their scripts for the scenes.

When TheatreBridge teachers spiral lesson plans throughout the year, students and teachers become comfortable with a visual theatre/arts integration approach. More importantly, the TheatreBridge approach helps build student success in meeting curricular standards. With each success, TheatreBridge’s research demonstrates that students build confidence, which leads to more success and the joy of learning.

### **Measuring Visual Theatre Skills**

Quest has developed the TheatreBridge Visual Theatre Rubric for two purposes: (a) to facilitate students’ development of visual theatre skills; and, (b) to guide teachers in assessing the visual theatre skills students need to meet curricular goals. The rubric identifies three major domains and skill sets: visual theatre, motivation, and creativity/composition. Each domain contains four levels of indicators and descriptions to aid teachers in student assessment. See Figures 6 and 7 for the domain descriptions and sample rubric.

Quest leaders encourage teachers to use rubrics to plan lessons and assess students’ visual theatre skills at the beginning and end of the school year, measuring progress. The rubric also serves as a planning tool. Teachers can refer to the rubric to identify visual theatre skill sets that will help students achieve curricular goals. Some teachers use the rubric along with photos and videos of student projects and activities in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, demonstrating to parents student growth and strategies for continued growth.



## Assessing TheatreBridge's Impact

In a study conducted September 2011 to June 2013, Quest staff employed a variety of tools to assess TheatreBridge's impact. These tools included teacher logs, classroom observations, the TheatreBridge Rubric, teacher and student interviews, and standardized test results. In their interviews with the TheatreBridge research team, teachers identified meaningful academic growth with their students. At the elementary level, this growth included: A greater retention of learned material; an increase in critical thinking; a greater understanding of content; and, enhanced story comprehension. At the middle school level teachers observed that their students: Were better able to internalize skills; improve their language skills; and, increase their literacy rates.

The study findings indicate that students are more invested in learning and increase their theatre, communication, and interpersonal skills when they engage in visual theatre activities that are woven into the curriculum. They more successfully participate in collaborative learning and gain a greater understanding and retention of content, while teachers noticed a reduction of inappropriate student behavior and outbursts.

TheatreBridge findings also clearly indicate that teachers have more fun teaching. The interview excerpt below from a TheatreBridge teacher captures both her and her students' enthusiasm for the visual theatre process.

*All the videotaping we have done. It's been great for [the students] to sit and watch, all by themselves, develop these skills [e.g., confidence, risk taking, critique]...We do film and then the kids come back and they watch their work and then, if time permits, ...I ask them if they are satisfied with it, if they feel it was clear, you know? And they evaluate their work and then we redo what they feel was not clear...I've used the tableau work repeatedly as a retelling of a story they've read, and after we read the story they determine how they're going to tell the story again. They become the characters. They decide how the tableaux should be shared to tell the story and then they rewrite it. And then, they take the finished book, their book, and they take it to the third grade class and they tell the story again with their tableaux...And my students have so improved in their ability to tell a story, with expression and with, like, this love, that just gets commu-*

nicated to the younger kids...Now, it's the expectation, if they really like a book, they'll say, "Can we tableau?" And then, "And can we tell it to the third grade?" So it's really been a benefit to both age groups. (MSD TheatreBridge teacher response during interview)

### Conclusion

Many Deaf and hard-of-hearing students enter school academically and socially delayed. Therefore, parents, teachers, and administrators must work cooperatively to construct academic, social, and cultural experiences that nurture and challenge these students. What is clear from the TheatreBridge research is that Quest's visual theatre/arts integration lays a firm foundation for student success. In the ensuing years, Quest will continue to seek opportunities to be part of the community dialogue. Quest's website will serve as an important education resource. The TheatreBridge section of the website will include lesson plans, visual theatre games, research findings and resources related to visual theatre that will be freely available to anyone. The Quest staff will continue to provide professional development to educators throughout the world. The company will continue to provide visual theatre residencies in schools in many settings. Quest's goal is to create a global community of learners who are committed to providing all students with a quality education that includes visual theatre.

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**Figure 1. Environments Game****Environments****Educational value:**

- Increases student's ability to concentrate
- Encourages creativity
- Enhances student's visual imaging skills
- Develops a sense of ensemble
- Improves student's ability to recognize and perform patterns and sequences
- Encourages students to take risks

[This game requires a space free of impediments and large enough to enable the group to move freely.]

We are going to play a game called "Environments." I'm going to give you a gesture for a particular environment when I sign "go," you move in that environment until I sign "freeze."

Our first environment is "fog." I'll sign it like this (show again). This whole space, this whole room is filled with fog. Imagine what that is like. Ready. Go. [Allow the group to explore and discover and have fun. There should be no talking. After a minute or two sign freeze. Wait until everyone has totally frozen. Keep the freeze sign until there is total stillness. Clap your hands a couple of times and indicate that the participants are to return to their circle.] Our next environment is syrup, but I'll sign it this way ["sticky"]. This whole room is filled with syrup. Through the magic of theatre you will be able to breath. You won't die. Imagine yourself trying to move or walk through "sticky." Ready "sticky" "go."

[Same procedure. Your instructions should diminish as you go through the different environments. Be sure to indicate for ice, hot, water 1 inch that the whole floor is that environment.]

**Environments Sequence**

- Fog
- Syrup (sticky)
- Ice (floor)
- Hot (floor)
- Water (1 inch)
- Water (waist high)
- Water (neck high)

[After to you complete the cycle.]

Great job. OK, let's review. What are our environments? First is was...? Then...? [etc]

OK, here we go again. Begin the sequence again, but this time you do not sign "freeze." Start with "fog" then at some point sign "sticky" several times until most of the group sees

the new sign. Allow them to adjust and get it right. If someone doesn't get it, don't worry about it. They will eventually figure it out. As the sequence goes along, shorten the length of time you sign the next environment. Don't be too brief, but enough for reasonable number of folks to see it and get it. You want the group to begin to depend on each other and not just you.

Go through the exact same sequence. Then go back to "water" (1 inch). Once everyone is doing that environment, get up on a chair or something to elevate yourself. Begin by gesturing "waves" on a beach. You can make the sound of waves if you want. Keep doing it. Allow the group to figure it out and have fun with it. The sign "freeze." When they all freeze give them a big round of applause. Then ask them to sit in a circle.]

### Sample processing questions

When someone responds to a question, repeat and rephrase their response so that everyone gets it and you reinforce the important points.

- What did you discover in that game? What did you learn in that game?
  - I used my imagination.
  - I had fun.
  - I moved differently in different environments? [Follow up question: How?]
- Before you can move in an environment, what did you have to do first?
  - I had to imagine the environment first [Follow up: Is that important in theatre?]
  - Yes. [Why?]
  - Because to be a character in a play or to do anything in the play well, I need to have specific image in my head first.]
- Did you always know when to stop or change an environment?
  - No [The how did you know which environment we were in?]
  - I had to watch the others in the group. [Is being aware of others on stage important in theatre?]
  - Yes [Why?]
  - Because most of the time you are acting with other people on stage. [That's right. So this is a good game to develop a sense of ensemble, a group, everyone working together.]
- Is there a sequence in this game?...What is that sequence?
- Are sequences important in theatre?
  - Yes [Why?]
  - Actors must memorize lines or sequences.

Anything else you discovered with this game?

**Figure 2. Big/Little****Big/Little****Educational value:**

- Encourages creativity
- Enhances student's visual imaging skills
- Develops a sense of ensemble
- Encourages students to take risks
- Enhances a student's critical eye
- Develops counting and sequencing skills
- Increases understanding a numerical values

We're going to play a game. It's called "Big and Small." In this game, you need to pay attention to my instructions. First, we are going to stand up, leave some room between you and the next person. Now just stand in what we call a neutral or relaxed position. We're now going to make ourselves as big as possible. We are going to first do this as slowly as possible. Are you ready? OK, feel yourself start to grow. You are getting bigger...bigger... bigger. You are so big it feels like you can fill up this room with your whole body. You're really big. You are huge. Uhoh! I'm getting smaller. I'm slowly getting smaller...smaller... smaller. I'm shrinking. I'm getting small. Now I'm getting teeny. I'm so small. Wow, the room is so big because I am so small. Uhoh! I'm getting bigger...

[And so on. Repeat the big then small a couple of times.] Now that you are big, move about the room as a big, big person. I'm big. I'm really big. Uhoh, I'm getting smaller. .. Now that you are small move around the room as a small, small person...I'm growing again! I'm growing back to...normal. Whew! It feels good to be my size again.

Can anyone tell me something that is really big? (Elephant, tree, house, whale, etc) OK, let's imagine we are a [object]. Let's become a big, big [object]. Now, move around as a [object]. Very Good. Now slowly become yourself and your normal size.

Can anyone tell me something that is really small? (ant, bee, fly, atom, etc) OK, let's imagine we are a [object]. Let's get small like a [object]. Let move around as a [object]. Very good. Now become yourself and your normal size.

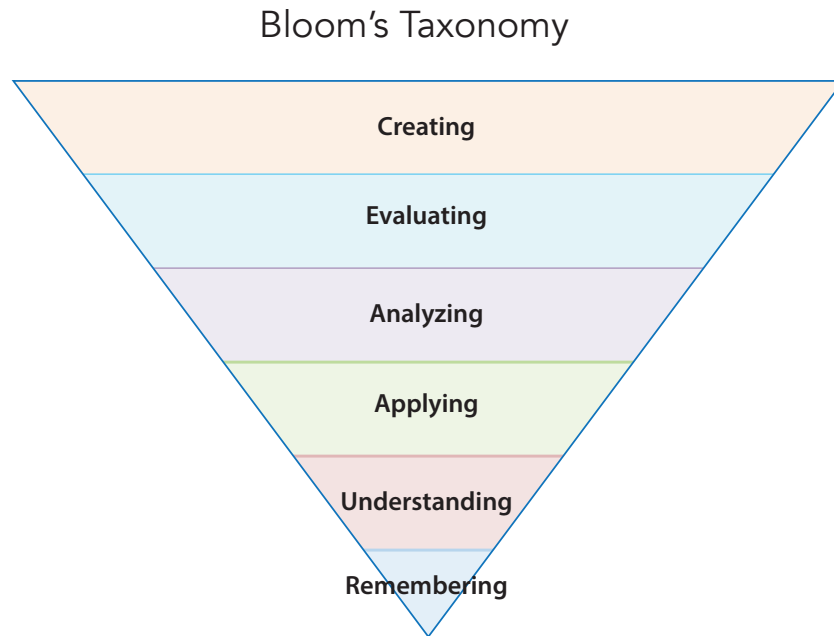
[Repeat the exercise as different things. Then ask for a volunteer to be big like a [object] and someone else to be small as a [object]. ]

Thank you, I want the two of you to move around as [object 1] and [object 2]. Are you ready? Go. Now try to interact with each other.

[Let the two actors interact for a bit.] OK, great! Let's thank our actors [applause]. Can I have two more volunteers? What should we have them be this time? [Assign the actors two different characters/objects and repeat the activity.]

OK very good. What do you think we learned from this game? [Response]

**Figure 3. Bloom's Taxonomy**



Revised edition by Lorin Anderson (as student of Bloom).

(Clark, 2013)

**Figure 4: 1, 2, 3 Game****1, 2, 3****Educational Value:**

- Improves a student's ability to focus
- Promotes a sense of ensemble (enhances the student's commitment to and contribution to group work)
- Develops student's ability to follow directions
- Clarifies vocabulary (interpreting specific emotions)
- Improves a student's physical composition skills
- Enhances a student's critical eye
- Improves constructive criticism skills
- Enhances student's ability to accept and use criticism
- Increases student's attention to detail
- Increases student's ability to follow directions

Place an object Left, one Center and one Right.

This is a game about focus and using our body to sculpt pictures. The body is an essential actor's tool in visual theatre. We need to create pictures that the audience can readily clearly and easily see and understand. Because we have limited time, I'll give one hint about creating interesting pictures...levels. If we create different levels with our bodies, pictures that the audience might not expect or pictures that have interesting shapes that evoke a thought or feeling, we have a better chance of engaging the audience.

For this game, you will enter from the Right with a general focus. I'll clap my hands and you rush to #1 and freeze in a tableau. The object is the focus. So no matter what picture you create, you must be looking at the object.

I'll clap my hands again and you break and walk around with a general focus. I clap again and you rush to #2 to create a second tableau. I clap...general...I clap...tableau for #3.

Note: when you rush to an object, you don't have to leave the object where it is, you can raise it and thus move the focus. You still need to freeze.

After each group does their tableaux, the audience provides feedback about what worked and didn't.

After the first group goes, you can add contrasting emotions to the three objects.

At the end of the game, process with the participants about what they learned in this game.



**Figure 5. Sample Lesson Plan****Characters with Fabric for Creative Writing**

Title of Lesson: Characters with Fabric for Creative Writing      Instructor/Author: Susan Maginnis  
 Date of Actual Lesson: January 25-26, 2012      Grade: 6-8 (Instructional Level: 2)

<b>Arts:</b> Theatre	<b>Content Area/Subject:</b> Language Arts
<b>Standards:</b> 3.0 Creative Expression and Production	<b>Standards:</b> 4.0 Writing
<b>Topic/Goal:</b> Students will demonstrate the ability to apply theatrical knowledge, principles, and practices and to collaborative theatre presentations.	<b>Topic/Goal:</b> Students will compose in a variety of modes by developing content, employing specific forms, and selecting language appropriate for a particular audience and purpose.
<b>Indicator/Objectives:</b> 1. Use a variety of theatrical elements to communicate ideas and feelings <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create improvisational scenes using given ideas to develop characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions</li> <li>2. Demonstrate knowledge of theatre performance and production skills in formal and informal presentations             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use selected posture and movement to enact improvised characters</li> </ol> </li> </ol> 1. Use collaborative theatre processes to create, perform, and revise scenes that are based on imagination and personal experience	<b>Indicator/Objectives:</b> 1. Compose texts using the prewriting and drafting strategies of effective writers <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Generate ideas and topics and make a plan before writing</li> <li>2. Write a first draft with a main idea and supporting details</li> <li>3. Organize related ideas into a simple paragraph</li> <li>4. Compose oral, written, and visual presentations that express personal ideas, inform, and persuade             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contribute to a shared writing experience or topic of interest</li> <li>2. Use sensory details to expand ideas</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>Vocabulary:</b> improvisation, setting, conflict, resolution	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Main idea, details, adjectives, problem, solution

<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-color, large pieces of fabric</li> <li>• Story map</li> <li>• Vocabulary cards</li> <li>• LCD projector</li> <li>• ELMO camera</li> </ul>
<p><b>(DAY 1)</b> <b>Background/Review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the meaning of improvisation, setting, conflict, and resolution</li> <li>• Review main idea, details, and adjectives</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Procedure</b> <b>(Introduction, Modeling, Guided Practice, Independent Practice, Closure):</b></p> <p>(Introduction)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the meanings of the vocabulary being used.</li> <li>2. Have students stand in a circle with the fabric in the middle.</li> <li>3. Explain that using only the fabric they will develop characters. Emphasize that the characters should be developed to the point that the audience can guess who they are based on appearance and mannerisms. They should not use language to identify their character.</li> </ol> <p>(Modeling)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose a piece of fabric and develop a character.</li> <li>2. Ask the students to guess the identity of the character.</li> </ol> <p>(Guided Practice)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Direct the students to select their fabric and begin developing a character.</li> <li>2. As the activity progresses make suggestions about refining the character or adding more detail.</li> </ol> <p>(Independent Practice)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue the activity until the students appear ready to guess each other's characters.</li> <li>2. Return to the circle and "perform" for each other. Have the students guess each other's characters.</li> <li>3. Give the students a setting and direct them to develop a conflict and resolution within the setting for all the characters.</li> <li>4. Continue the improvisation until the "story" is complete.</li> </ol> <p>(Closure)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain that the next day they will write a collaborative creative story about the characters, problem, and solution they developed.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Assessment:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Observe students ability to develop well defined characters using only fabric.</li> <li>2. Observe students ability to create an improvisational scene in which the characters are connected through a common setting, conflict and resolution.</li> </ol>

**(DAY 2)****Background/Review:**

- Review the meaning of improvisation, setting, conflict, and resolution
- Review main idea, details, and adjectives
- Review the original characters that were developed the day before

**Procedure****(Introduction, Modeling, Guided Practice, Independent Practice, Closure):**

(Introduction)

1. Review the meanings of the vocabulary being used.
2. Explain to the students they will write the story they created together the day before.
3. Have students recreate the characters and the scene they created (using the fabric).  
Allow them to "tweak" their work if they desire.

(Modeling)

1. Project the "Story Map" on the white board and ask the students to return to their desks and work together to fill in the information based on the scene they created together.
2. Assist with proper placement of story elements where necessary.
3. Instruct the students to transfer the information on the story map to paragraph form (provide modeling and support when necessary).

(Guided Practice)

- Have students take turns reading their original story with appropriate expression.

(Independent Practice)

- Students read their story to each other in pairs.

(Closure)

- For homework, students will illustrate scenes from their story to be displayed with the story.

**Assessment:**

- Observe students' ability to transfer the scene they created into a collaborative piece of writing.

**Figure 6. Domain Descriptors**

<p><b>Visual Theatre</b></p> <p>Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical control</li> <li>• Appropriate use of space</li> <li>• Efficient movement</li> <li>• Use of stillness and stops</li> <li>• Timing and coordinated movement</li> <li>• Communicates clearly and precisely with body movements</li> <li>• Uses range of physical dynamics and expressive movements</li> </ul> <p>Physical Expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates clearly and precisely with body movements</li> <li>• Uses range of physical dynamics and expressive movements</li> <li>• Uses body to create character</li> </ul> <p>Verbal Expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wants to express self</li> <li>• Uses visual and auditory means of verbal expression</li> <li>• Is understandable to others</li> <li>• Verbally communicates character or mood</li> </ul> <p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works well with others</li> <li>• Respects and actively attends to others</li> <li>• Accepts and uses the rules of an activity</li> <li>• Shows concern for the group</li> <li>• Is aware of audience</li> </ul> <p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observes and recalls details of models, peers, pictures, and scenes</li> <li>• Asks questions and seeks information</li> <li>• Can create from observations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Motivation</b></p> <p>Commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes risks/shows courage</li> <li>• Perseveres at a task</li> <li>• Wants to improve</li> </ul> <p>Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains eye contact and attention</li> <li>• Sustains concentration on the task</li> <li>• Gives and takes focus appropriately with others</li> <li>• Can respond appropriately in the moment</li> </ul> <p>Reflection/Critique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes and applies direction and criticism</li> <li>• Provides meaningful, constructive feedback to others</li> <li>• Recognizes superior performance by others</li> <li>• Understands how choices affect outcomes</li> </ul> <p><b>Creativity/Composition</b></p> <p>Problem Solving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees whole picture</li> <li>• Offers ideas</li> <li>• Understands sequence</li> <li>• Explores multiple solutions</li> </ul> <p>Imagination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages in creative play</li> <li>• Believes in given context or circumstances</li> <li>• Invents dramatic situations</li> <li>• Demonstrates ability to improvise</li> </ul>
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**Figure 7. Visual Theatre Skills Rubric**  
**Visual Theatre Skills Rubric for Students**

TheatreBridge Project

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher/Aide: \_\_\_\_\_

DOMAINS/SKILLS	STUDENT PERFORMANCE LEVELS				
	BEGINNING (1)	DEVELOPING (2)	PROFICIENT (3)	ADVANCED (4)	SCORE/ COMMENTS
<b>Visual Theatre</b>					
<b>Movement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical control</li> <li>• Appropriate use of space</li> <li>• Efficient movement</li> <li>• Use of stillness and stops</li> <li>• Timing and coordinated movement</li> </ul>	Lacks control of body or parts of body which are focus of activity. May not move at all, or may use little movement or rock or sway. Movements may be uncontrolled, overly exaggerated, repetitive, or unnecessary. Lacks awareness of available space—bumps into objects and other students. Movements are awkward and run together.	Demonstrates some awareness of movement and space, but lacks adequate control. Attempts appropriate movements though performance is inconsistent. Uses more movement than needed. Movements are hesitant, choppy, or lack sharpness	Controls body movements with some inconsistency. Movements generally clear, deliberate, and appropriate to the activity. Demonstrates awareness of timing. Demonstrates awareness of own and others' movements within available space. Uses stops between movements, but with some choppiness	Consistently controls body movements. Body is appropriately aligned and centered. Movement choices are deliberately, efficient, and clear. Adjust movements to available space. Timing is smooth. Uses breathe to coordinate own movements with those of others. Creates clean stops between movements with dynamic stillness.	Score:

## Mastering the Curriculum: Students Framed as Experts

LINDA KRAKAUR

*In 2004, a group of documentarians were tasked with filming the life of a teenaged girl who had overcome tremendous obstacles during the Great Depression. These were no ordinary documentarians. These experts were seventh grade Language Arts students, many of whom had been identified with learning disabilities. Yet, through the dramatic frame known as mantle of the expert (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) these students were able to “live through” and construct intensely meaningful episodes of learning in roles that they selected and enacted. In the process, the socio-cultural dynamics of the mainstreamed classroom also shifted as the fictional world provided students with disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate their individual assets and become classroom leaders. Ultimately, drama in education served as a means to applying the principles of Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2011) in a rigorous manner by creating authentic reasons for knowing, being, and doing. The impact of these lessons “in” and “through” the dramatic world proved to have lasting effects both within and beyond the classroom.*

“Stop placing kids in the idiot box.” This evocative directive from the famed visual artist with cerebral palsy, “King Gimp” (Dan Keplinger, 2010), to a group of teachers in Washington, DC, is a cautionary tale expressing the frustrations of generations of students with special needs who have been underestimated and over-classified. Shifting students with learning disabilities from self-contained to inclusive classrooms, beginning in 1975, was an historic step toward achieving equity for all learners. Yet these students may have had their academic progress slowed by the introduction of high-stakes policy initiatives such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001). Greater attention to standardized test scores and the norming of student objectives and expectations resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum and an emphasis on test-taking skills for students. These shifts in priorities and pedagogy presents an approach to teaching and learning that may not enable students with disabilities to perform in an optimal way (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2004) Standardization in schools has drawn attention to that which is being tested rather than addressing the emotional, social, and individual needs of students (Eisner, 2001). For too many students with learning disabilities, the stigma of having

“special needs” undermined student confidence, reduced engagement, and increased anxiety regarding academic performance (Gerber, 2011; Pisha & Coyne, 2001). Research showed that heightened attention to student performance on standardized tests could ultimately decrease student motivation to participate and find meaning in curricula (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2004). In too many cases, the “normalizing” of objectives, assessments, and expectations for all students in public schools has exacerbated the negative aspects of schooling for students with learning disabilities (Cole, 2006). Standardization may lead teachers to a focus on how students with disabilities differ from the established norms rather than on the unique assets that these students bring into the learning community.

Despite the worthy intentions of federal policy makers who claimed that aggregating the data for student subgroups would ultimately serve those who have “historically been underserved” (Cawthon, 2007, p. 462), the effects reveal a more troubling scenario for students with learning disabilities. The latest data published by the Department of Education (2001-2011) in *The National Transition Longitudinal Study-2 (NTLS-2)* indicated that students with disabilities who have been mainstreamed continue to perform far behind their classmates. This comprehensive study of more than 11,000 secondary students receiving special education services demonstrated that during the first decade of this millennium, students with disabilities performed on average 3.4 years behind general education students in reading and 3.2 years behind in math. Additionally, this achievement gap increased as students with learning disabilities progressed to higher grades. Unfortunately, neither a shift in educational setting nor a shift in the measurements of students with learning disabilities has ensured greater achievement. According to the NTLS-2 findings, more than half of students with learning disabilities failed a general education academic course and were twice as likely to fail at least one course in a general education setting as opposed to a special education setting (Newman, Wagner, Huang, Shaver, Knokey, Contreras, Ferguson, Breene, Nagle, Cameto, 2011).

Returning students with learning disabilities to self-contained classrooms is not the solution to this dilemma. Rather, policy makers, schools, and teachers need to recognize the range of pedagogical challenges presented by students with learning disabilities, so teachers

can respond to them in a productive manner (Glass, Meyer, & Rose, 2013). Greater attention needs to be placed on the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of students with learning disabilities (Abedin, 2010) rather than on test scores. O'Sullivan (2011) described the current high-stakes educational paradigm as ineffective noting that it undermines the abilities of students with exceptionalities by emphasizing particular types of intelligence over others. Determinations of student success based on a single instrument (standardized tests) presents an obstacle that students with learning differences may find defeating. Lack of attention to holistic learning goals such as the development of critical thinking skills, collaborative habits, and emotional resiliency is not only troubling, but could potentially undermine those objectives established in Individualized Education Programs and further alienate students who may already feel marginalized. Gerber (2011) noted "test-driven schools and classrooms just frustrate students who learn differently and only draw attention to those learning differences" (p. 4).

Recognizing the lack of progress for students with learning disabilities under NCLB, the Obama administration (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) proposed the following two modifications to educational policies pertaining to students with disabilities:

1. Assessments that more accurately and appropriately measure the performance of students with disabilities
2. High-quality, state- and locally-determined curricula and instructional supports that incorporate the principles of **Universal Design for Learning** to meet all students' needs

These modifications to federal policy hold promise as they are more clearly aligned with recent findings in neuroscience. Diverse ways of experiencing, developing, and representing knowledge are essential for learning and should be accounted for in pedagogy and assessments (Gardner, 1991).

### **Universal Design for Learning**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is described as a research-based and robust pedagogical framework grounded in an approach to curriculum development that provides all students with the opportunity to learn (CAST, 2011). UDL also guides educators to recognize



that difference is the norm, not the exception (Hall, Meyer, & Rose, 2012). In other words, the diversity of learning needs should guide instruction rather than instruction being guided by attempts to make all students the same. UDL has been defined as an effective and inclusive pathway for teachers to maximize individual ways of knowing, doing, and being as it validates multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement in every lesson (Rose & Gravel, 2010). Educators who teach inclusive classes may experience greater success as a result of these explicit guidelines as UDL provides an instructional framework for teachers to decrease obstacles to student learning in order to build challenging and effective lessons for all (Glass, et al., 2013). Additionally, the UDL framework balances the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of the student through a holistic approach to instruction.

As more teachers adopt UDL strategies, the needs of diverse learners can be increasingly identified and addressed. Barringer, Pohlman, & Robinson (2010) suggested that such a shift in priorities will prove to be transformative for classroom practice ultimately improving student achievement. Yet, such broad shifts in pedagogy require intensive training. Although teachers are being introduced to UDL in greater numbers, many still struggle to implement this framework into their teaching practice. This paper presents one method that teachers can use to authentically and seamlessly integrate UDL into their pedagogy.

### **Arts Education**

Fowler (1996) described the arts as a “significant way for students to discern, express, communicate, figure out, and understand the human universe” (p. 4) as they are intrinsic to the way humans make sense of the world (Bamford, 2009). As the three principles of UDL (multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement) are embedded in arts experiences, teachers who utilize the arts in their teaching create conditions in which all learners benefit. Furthermore, teaching students “in” the arts (focusing on arts elements and principles) and “through” the arts (shaping understanding in non-arts content) provides an authentic pathway to implementing UDL as arts experiences are accessible to the diverse ways (linguistic, cultural, and cognitive) that students gain understanding (Hall, et al., 2012).

Just as the Obama administration has recognized the value of UDL, so has it acknowledged the benefits of arts education for diverse learners. According to the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities (2011) "arts integration models, the practice of teaching across classroom subjects in tandem with the arts, have been yielding some particularly promising results in school reform and closing the achievement gap" (p. vi). The arts provide an impetus for innovation by "providing teachers with more effective classroom strategies, engaging students in learning, and creating a climate of high performance in schools" (p. vi). When arts integration is implemented within the framework of UDL, not only are two of the Obama administrations' goals addressed, so are the dynamic needs of students with disabilities.

As Glass, Meyers, and Rose (2013) suggested, "just as UDL can provide a structured means for understanding human variability, the arts can enhance our ability to respond to variability" (p. 107). Teachers who work with students with learning disabilities need powerful methods to address student needs. Arts integration provides a robust pathway to curriculum design that teachers can employ to effectively differentiate instruction.

### **Drama in Education**

Drama in education is an arts-based approach to teaching and learning that integrates pedagogical best practices with the principles of UDL. Clipson-Boyes (1998) described drama in education as an exploration and communication of ideas, issues, subject matter, themes, stories, and feelings through participatory action and imagination. More specifically, teachers who utilize drama in education employ dramatic elements such as focus, tension, role, imagination, symbol, and space to engage students and to achieve educational objectives (both arts and non-arts related). Howell and Heap (2013) explained that drama is a social process in which students develop a spectrum of growth (social, emotional, cultural, creative, and cognitive). Additionally, drama in education provides a medium for students to demonstrate shifts in perception and deepened understanding. For students with learning disabilities, drama in education provides a dynamic alternative to traditional classroom practices

as the learning occurs through an “as if” world where experimentation is encouraged, language and texts are expressed in multiple ways, and students select a variety of roles, allowing them to become empowered makers of meaning (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011). Furthermore, no prior acting or performance experiences in drama are required as students rely on their unique resources and personal experiences to manifest authentic acts of learning.

### **Using Process Drama to Engage Students in Robust Acts of Meaning**

In 2004, I conducted a research study to complete my Master’s dissertation. The intention of the study was to develop and assess an arts integrated approach to teaching reading and writing with a group of students in an inclusive classroom. The objective was to determine how drama in education would impact a broad spectrum of domains (emotional, social, and cognitive) and support the academic growth of students with diverse learning needs. To determine the effectiveness of the intervention, I used a mixed-methods approach, including interviews with students, parents, teachers, and other school staff, as well as observations, and an analysis of artifacts. Student scores (pre and post-test) were collected from a reading attitude survey and standardized tests. This paper identifies and describes the practices that were found to have a significant impact on the academic, social, and emotional needs of students with learning disabilities.

### **Context for the Project**

Participants in this study were members of a seventh grade Language Arts general education class in a suburb outside of Washington, DC. Ten students with learning disabilities represented over half of the classroom population. The class was co-taught by a general education and special education teacher. I developed four case studies of students with learning disabilities who differed in gender, ethnicity, and learning needs. These four students served as the primary focus of the research; however, the breadth of the findings suggested that other students had also been significantly impacted by the intervention. Therefore, relevant data for all students were

included as evidence in the final report. Drama in education was integrated into the curriculum over the course of three months, two days a week for ninety-minute blocks. The pretext for these lessons was a novel, *Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hesse (1999), which was required reading for all students in the class. Both teachers participated in the study. The general education classroom teacher served mainly as an observer while the special educator participated in the drama and worked with students intermittently.

I used a technique called “mantle of the expert” (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) to frame the dramatic work. The students accepted roles as expert documentarians tasked with investigating the life of a teenaged girl (Billy Jo) who lived in the Dust Bowl. I enacted differing roles such as teacher and researcher (outside of the drama), and facilitator and characters (inside of the drama) to facilitate this project. Signals and explanations were always communicated clearly, so students would be comfortable and develop trust in the process. Students enacted varied roles that supported them in understanding the characters and conflicts embedded in the novel. They also selected expert roles (ie. actors, choreographers, costume designers, script writers) to create a coming attraction of the documentary they had been tasked with creating.

At the conclusion of this project, findings revealed academic, social, and emotional growth for the four case study students as well as many of their peers - both students identified with and without disabilities. In particular, notable gains were made by students with learning disabilities who had previously struggled with academic achievement and feelings of insecurity. Parents and students were provided with written copies of the results after the conclusion of the study.

### **Process Drama and *Out of the Dust***

The experiences of students participating in the project are grounded in the work of two drama in education pioneers. These methods are more commonly known as “process drama” (O’Neill, 1995) and “mantle of the expert” (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). O’Neill (1995) described process drama as the strategic exploration of a pretext such as a story, newspaper article, photograph, etc. through a series of dramatic episodes “that are part of a web of meaning.”

The pretext for the project was a novel selected by the classroom teacher. *Out of the Dust*, (Hesse, 1999) depicts the life (historical fiction) of a teenaged girl (Billie Jo) and her struggles to overcome difficult family and environmental conditions during the Great Depression. This novel presented several challenges for students as the story was written through a series of narrative poems, was situated in an unfamiliar and historical setting, and described lived experiences that were quite foreign to the students in the class. To address these potential barriers, process drama was selected as the intervention of choice because it provides opportunities for the teacher and students to slow down time, assume multiple roles and perspectives, and increase attention to details and dilemmas. Mantle of the expert was implemented as a framing device applied to the dramatic context whereby students entered the fictional world as experts tasked with producing a documentary based on the life of a young girl they had never met. Entering the dramatic world through the role of competent “professionals” was utilized as an asset-based approach to situating students as capable members of the learning community regardless of their prior experiences in Language Arts. Ultimately, through inquiry based investigations and improvised enactments of critical moments in the novel, major shifts for participants in both the fictional world and in their own lives were noted. The following describes how drama in education implemented within a UDL framework is an effective pedagogical approach to meeting the needs of diverse learners.

### **Multiple Means of Representation**

This first principle of UDL provides guidelines for teachers to develop resourceful, knowledgeable learners (CAST, 2011) by providing options for how students perceive information, construct and embody text and language, and access prior knowledge and essential understandings. Whereas traditional teaching approaches in Language Arts classes frequently privilege written texts as the source for learning, drama in education uses a variety of aesthetic representations (props, body language, facial expressions, etc.) to prompt students to “imagine possibilities, explore roles, rehearse and revise oral language, and use

the experiences to expand interpretations of texts” (Crumpler, 2006, p. 1). For example, on the first day of the project, students examined an old suitcase filled with objects that were described as belonging to Billie Joe. Relying only on their curiosity, inference skills, and prior knowledge, the students were assigned small groups and tasked with “reading” the objects. This included picking them up, describing them on paper using concrete, sensory details, and finally conjecturing on who owned them, where she was going, and why these particular items were taken on the trip. All groups created plausible scenarios based on evidence and context clues. Several groups were surprisingly accurate in their scenarios, so much so that I had to rely on another dramatic element (surprise), to not reveal the entire mystery on the first day and undermine interest in the novel.

Nate, a student with an IEP who found reading particularly challenging, wrote in his journal on the first day: “Today I learned how to put things together like taking “a” and “b” and put them together. I was having fun and only thinking about what we were doing. Is it going to be like this the whole time?” His enthusiasm and that of his peers, based on successful interrogation of objects (texts), was intensified when I handed out a fictional letter addressed to the class from Ms. Bosley, the “director” of the American Film Board. The letter stated that she was looking for a highly inquisitive and creative group of middle school students to create a documentary about the life of a troubled teenager who had run away from home. Students quickly connected their investigation of the suitcase with this request for their services and unanimously agreed to go assume the role of filmmakers.

The next day, I again explained that students would be entering a fictional world where they (and I) would have multiple roles. When I handed out the novel as a ‘diary’ revealing the secret thoughts of the owner of the luggage, the repurposing of the text proved engaging for even the most reluctant readers. Even those who had earlier expressed doubts about the relevance of reading, quickly began flipping through the pages. A shift in Daniel’s attitude toward reading was noticeable in a letter he wrote after being told that funding might become an obstacle to the completion of the documentary.

Dear Ms. Bosley,

Ever since Ms. Kay [Ms. Krakaur] came we started reading this terrific book called Out of the dust. It is a very important book. I am learning a lot.

Please try to get some money. I don't care if you have to steal please everybody likes the project. I can assure you that L.J. is a trustworthy & good

Donation. Imagine you giving us money, you will be very popular, To this school. I even am loving this book. And I hate reading.

Gallas (2003) stated that literacy entails an ability to construct and manipulate a variety of texts. She pointed to imagination as a key to unlocking text. As demonstrated in these vignettes, students with learning disabilities have plenty of imagination; what they often lack is access to content knowledge through meaningful and varied forms.

### **Multiple Means of Action and Expression**

This second principle of UDL provides guidelines for teachers to support students in becoming strategic, goal-directed learners (CAST, 2011). Teachers are encouraged to employ active learning strategies, vary modes for students to express and communicate, and provide options for student goal-setting and progress monitoring.

In their roles as expert filmmakers, students consistently strategized how to interpret key moments depicted in the novel. They achieved their goals by taking on a variety of roles to portray and experience critical moments in the lives of the characters. Afterward, the students reflected and made meaning of these enactments in their roles as directors, scriptwriters, prop designers, etc.

One poignant moment both in the fictional world of the novel and in the real world context of the classroom occurred when students were asked to create a scene at the cemetery after Billie Jo lost her pregnant mother to an accidental house fire. (Although this scene at the cemetery was not part of the novel, process drama allows for both teachers and students to become writers of episodes of significance that can be explored for meaning, intention, and consequence). Jay, a bright student with a learning disability who was often teased by his peers for repeating seventh grade,

volunteered to take on the role of Pa. As Jay knelt down to create a tableau (still-image) of how he envisioned this moment, he grasped an apple – an appropriate symbol of the abundance of life that had been absent from Billie Jo’s childhood in the Dust Bowl. Through this medium, Jay exhibited the insights and understandings that he had struggled to demonstrate through traditional teaching practices. Jay’s use of body language, facial expression, and symbolism communicated a depth of comprehension that had remained dormant in much of his prior schooling. When asked to complete a writing prompt of the five wishes Pa would have expressed at that moment, Jay responded:

1. I remember to put the carosine away
2. I was dead
3. My wife was still hear
4. This had never happen
5. It was me instead of her

Gardner (1991) stated that “an important symptom of an emerging understanding is the capacity to represent a problem in a number of different ways” (p. 9). Jay had demonstrated his understanding of the father’s inner conflict both physically and in writing. Through drama in education, Jay selected how he wanted to interpret the significance of the moment and demonstrated a level of motivation that would lead to future gains in comprehension and confidence. Furthermore, Jay’s role in the fictional world resulted in acknowledgment of his assets in the real world as the chiding of his peers dissipated. After the drama, Jay’s teacher commented, “He’s been very positive in class ever since. It’s made a major improvement: this might be the turning point in his life.”

### **Multiple Means of Engagement**

Glass, et al. (2013) described this principle of UDL as one of the greatest challenges for teachers to implement as the levels of engagement of students vary widely, and many students, particularly in secondary schools, become disillusioned. Students with learning disabilities are particularly prone to feeling marginalized as they



progress through school, as greater attention is paid to their test scores and academic performance than their diverse learning needs.

Although this third principle of UDL may prove challenging, it is essential to learning as purposeful, persistent and motivated students are more apt to overcome barriers. Teachers are encouraged to optimize student choice, autonomy, and authenticity. Developing collaborative habits and self-awareness are also central features of this principle.

Saxton and Miller (2006) described drama in education as an experiential and social means of making sense of the world. The social demands of working in drama and dramatic situations enacted in a drama heighten student engagement. Unlike the high-stakes pressures that may hinder students and reinforce feelings of failure, drama stimulates emotional investment and personal connection to the subject matter. Nate's initial excitement for the drama work increased over the remainder of the project as he was one of the first students to complete the book. Nate's mother commented, "That's all Nate would talk about. The problem wasn't getting him to read; it was getting him to stop reading, so he could go to sleep." Daniel, who had demonstrated oppositional behaviors before the project, not only finished the book at home during his spare time, but he also initiated a visit to the school library to read another book by the same author. On Awards Night, Daniel walked two miles back to school by himself, so he could be recognized for his achievements. Drama in education had indeed provided the means through which these reluctant readers transformed into purposeful, motivated learners who could overcome their learning challenges.

Drama in education also provided authentic learning opportunities. For example, Theresa, an adopted student from Russia, had been positioned on the social margins of the community. Although Theresa was quite bright, her delayed speech and unusual manner of dress led to her being ostracized. Yet, at the end of the project, when Theresa's group collaborated to plan a "coming attraction" for their documentary, she asserted her desire to take on several roles including costume organizer, lead actor, and piano player. While other groups relied on digital music, Theresa offered to

write an original composition and play it on the piano for her group. Whereas Theresa had previously appeared awkward and shy, drama in education allowed her to utilize her assets, skills, and talents. Each success propelled her confidence to reject her marginalized status. Theresa's mother reported feeling elated that Theresa had initiated a leadership role in her group. Theresa told her mother, "Hey, this is right up my alley because this is something I really want to do." At the end of the project, students filmed their coming attractions to be premiered at the school's Awards Night. As Theresa displayed her prowess at the piano her unassuming smile finally made an appearance. For Theresa and many of her classmates with learning disabilities, this performance provided an opportunity for "difference" to become an asset, and their peers and teachers applauded these efforts.

### **Conclusion**

Removing the walls separating students with learning disabilities from general education classes has not eliminated the barriers to learning. Rather, in many inclusion classes, the obstacles created by "high-stakes" accountability measures further marginalize those who differ from typically developing students (Cole, 2006). This project demonstrated that Universal Design for Learning provides a manageable framework to assist teachers in identifying and addressing the unique abilities and challenges of every student in the classroom. As demonstrated in the experiences of the students who participated in this project, implementation of UDL can lead to tremendous gains when teachers create a classroom centered on acts of meaning making and students taking ownership for their learning. The Obama administration has acknowledged the value of both UDL and the arts; yet, it takes more than an affirmation for these approaches to be enacted in classrooms. Drama in education provides one method to free students from the "idiot box" into what O'Neill (1995) described as "a sustained, intensive, and profoundly satisfying encounter" in the dramatic world. These benefits may carry over into the real world, too.

As this study showed, when students are provided with the opportunity to experience knowing, doing, and being in diverse ways in and through the arts, they can

make important gains emotionally, socially, and academically. Marcus was one student who had demonstrated improved reading comprehension and heightened engagement during this project; yet, teachers had later decided to move him into a self-contained classroom. "I liked the way it was before," Marcus said when I interviewed him months after the project had ended. "It was the best class ever."

Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2011) stated that "the importance of imagination and vision is often lost in the context of a scrutinized, quantified, and marketized education system" (p. 87). Drama in education and UDL present a rigorous two-pronged approach to empowerment for every child, particularly those with diverse learning needs. Change begins with teachers who insert imagination into classroom practice and shift the focus from standardized assessments for students with learning disabilities to the development of lessons that provide multiple pathways for students to demonstrate what they know and can do. As this study shows, students can demonstrate profound insights into literature, the world, and themselves when the arts are integrated in the curriculum with intention and purpose.

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# Emotional Intelligence Through Art: Strategies for Children with Emotional Behavioral Disturbances

SOPHIE LUCIDO JOHNSON

Students in New Orleans public school systems, facing high levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), are more likely than the national average to have a disability (Brault, 2011; Maggi, 2012). Arts-integrated social emotional interventions for students with behavioral differences and Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD), as demonstrated in a New Orleans project I developed called Emotional Intelligence Through Art (EITA), is a preventative, effective way to help students who have behavioral differences minimize destructive behavior and assimilate into general education settings. The interventions were simple, deliberate strategies such as ample time for student work and exploration, small group instruction, celebration of engagement as success, minimization of teacher talk, explicit vocabulary building around emotional language, and role-playing. Since 2010, four charter schools in New Orleans have participated in the Emotional Intelligence Through Art (EITA) program to teach arts-integrated emotional literacy in small group settings. The early results of EITA show that given targeted instruction, students with EBD—particularly those affected by PTSD—can significantly decrease violent behavior at school.

I organize the paper into three sections. First, I discuss the relationship between PTSD and EBD, and the rising need for functional interventions. Next, I discuss strategies for using the arts to explicitly teach social emotional objectives. In the final section of this paper, I present the outcomes of EITA, which demonstrate that targeted, arts-integrated interventions can significantly reduce the number of behavioral referrals for the growing number of students with symptoms of EBD.

## **Relationship between Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD)**

In August 2005, the people of New Orleans experienced a major trauma that would impact their lives forever. Hurricane Katrina damaged every major road and building in the city, breached the levees causing massive citywide flooding, and killed more than 1,400 people.

Roughly 33% of the survivors of Hurricane Katrina suffered symptoms of PTSD (Babbel, 2011). A study conducted by The Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies in 2012 found that at least a third of all children in New Orleans showed symptoms of depression and PTSD (Maggi, 2012). PTSD is just one type of emotional disorder that can exist for children in public schools. Emotional disorders like PTSD fall under the special education category of EBD, a broad identification of more specific difficulties of children and adolescents, such as Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Pacer Center, 2006). In the United States, 6.7% of all students who are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are identified as having EBD (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, & Epstein, 2005).

### **Case Study of a Student With PTSD**

Eva<sup>1</sup>, who was five years old, had been removed from three general education classrooms by the fourth week of the school year. She had attempted to choke one teacher with his own necktie, bitten a police officer, and pinched several students repeatedly without provocation. At school, she refused to speak with most adults. She sat in the corner and ripped up pieces of paper during class periods. Sometimes she grew angry for no identifiable reason, and she threw chairs, desks, or pairs of scissors. Teachers struggled to find a trigger for Eva's outbursts—that is, a consistent antecedent for her troubled behaviors (Sexual Assault Center, 2008).

Eva eventually revealed to the school psychologist that she had witnessed her father shoot a family friend while she was in his car with him, and she had seen the victim die. She had also witnessed a suicide, and had experienced physical abuse. Eva's behaviors, which included withdrawal from school, hyperactivity, opposition to authority, and violent outbursts, are characteristic of a child with EBD. Her experiences suggest that her emotional differences are a result of some degree of PTSD and situational depression.

Eva's teachers tried several behavioral intervention plans (BIPs), but with no real results. Eva spoke with the school psychologist once a week, but continued to act out in ways that

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<sup>1</sup> Name has been changed.



were generally considered detrimental to herself, and to others. Eventually, to keep Eva from being expelled from the school, her teachers and family members recommended evaluation for special education services. The special education evaluation confirmed the beliefs of those closest to Eva: she was identified as having EBD. However, the identification did not lessen the degree and magnitude of Eva's behavioral outbursts.

When Eva started second grade, she was enrolled in a once-weekly group activity for students with characteristics of EBD developed to target emotional intelligence through visual arts. It was a good fit for Eva as the only projects she ever completed were visual art projects, and she seemed uncharacteristically enthusiastic around new art supplies. In the small group of eight students, Eva spent an hour a week completing assignments in which she was asked to depict her emotions in abstract shapes and splashes of color using oil pastels, acrylic paints, and clay. Simultaneously, the group had started to incorporate role-playing into its lessons and Eva and her peers practiced explaining their hypothetical emotions in a variety of situations. For example, in one scenario presented to the group, students explained what they would feel if not selected first to be on a team. The goal was for the students in the group to eventually be able to identify their stressful emotions and communicate verbally those emotions to a teacher before acting impulsively. Four weeks after the first session, Eva told her homeroom teacher, "I am feeling frustrated, and I need some space to draw." Eva's teacher was speechless. Eva had never articulated her emotions before, and this time, although she was frustrated, the violent outburst never came.

By the end of the school year, Eva's behavior referrals per month had decreased from 22 to zero. Beginning in February of 2011, Eva experienced three months without a behavior referral. She was slowly able to re-integrate into the general education setting for more hours of each day. She also enrolled in Saturday art classes, where she began to build technical skills as an artist. Art offered Eva a gateway to feeling successful, and gave her an opportunity to acknowledge and describe her feelings. The engagement that art offered, coupled with appropriate class size and content that Eva genuinely lacked, helped Eva assimilate into the general education setting as a successful, bright, creative student.

## Interventions for Students With EBD

Eva's case provides one example of how a community disaster can lead to events contributing to the emotional instability of a young child. Her behaviors and subsequent diagnosis of EBD were typical of many PTSD cases identified after Hurricane Katrina (Langley, Kataoka, Stein, & Stein, 2012). According to the National Association of School Psychologists (Davis, Culotta, Levine & Rice, 2011), the supported definition of EBD is:

A condition in which behavioral or emotional responses of an individual in school are so different from his/her generally accepted, age appropriate, ethnic or cultural norms that they adversely affect performance in such areas as self care, social relationships, personal adjustment, academic progress, classroom behavior, or work adjustment. (p. 46)

EBD is identified most often in students who engage in oppositional and defiant behavior—such as refusing to do work, talking back to authority figures, and acting violently in nonviolent situations (Langley, et al., 2012). In the long term, students who have characteristics of EBD but do not receive formal social and emotional intervention pay a toll: more students with emotional differences drop out of school than graduate with diplomas (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008; Wagner, et al., 2005). Ultimately, failure to provide accommodations and modifications for students with EBD drastically affects not only students with behavioral differences, but also their peers. Since EBD often manifests in displays of disruptive and violent behaviors, the entire classroom community changes when the needs of a student with EBD are not met (Barber, 2003).

Most interventions suggested since the passing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004 relied on individualized behavioral intervention plans (BIPs), which are usually driven by external rewards (US Department of Education, 2006). These plans are developed from Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs), and they are important components of working with children who have been identified as having EBD. However, preventative and ongoing instruction targeting social emotional learning is also important for all students who display emotional differences. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning identifies dozens of school-wide preventative social emotional curricula

available for all grade levels (Casel, 2013). Still, schools do not acceptably provide interventions for students with EBD. In 2009, an estimated 6 to 10 percent of school-aged students had some kind of emotional or behavioral disorder, but only one percent received formal special education services or interventions (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009).

### **Using Art to Teach Social Emotional Learning**

Researchers generally agree that there are five main elements of social and emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). Social emotional curricula encourage teachers to build classroom objectives around these competencies, and to teach them like they would teach math, reading, and writing.

Unfortunately, many of these curricula depend on language skills, such as talking, role-playing, or writing, to benefit from the main ideas and objectives the curricula intend to address. For students who have experienced significant trauma, or who exhibit characteristics of EBD, language skills are not always readily accessible. Talking or writing about social and emotional concepts can cause students with emotional differences to feel frustrated and, thus, never access the content.

Art offers a gateway for students with emotional differences because it necessarily engages experiential learning opportunities, and allows students to access content without initially using spoken or written language. Students who have experienced trauma in their lives are often not used to feeling successful at school. They are often mis-diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and are given medication that can diminish their participation even more (Henion & Elder, 2010). When students who have not experienced much success at school encounter art education for the first time, in which success can feel immediate and accessible, they often find themselves newly invested in school (Arlington, 2009).

To capitalize on engagement that accompanies creativity, teachers can integrate social emotional objectives into art lessons. The content, then, becomes the social emotional competencies that students with EBD need to learn; and students, teachers, and parents become invested in success because of the engagement and experiential nature of the learning.

## **Emotional Intelligence Through Art (EITA): A Targeted Program for Students With EBD**

Eva's success was due in large part to a program in which she spent 60 minutes once a week in a small group designed to explicitly integrate art with social emotional learning. This program has been implemented for the past three years in two schools in New Orleans, both as a weekly small group intervention of eight to ten children ages five to ten, and as a whole class lesson with a co-teacher for groups of 30 fourth graders. The program was developed in partnership with KidSmart, an organization in New Orleans that works towards linking the arts with academic core curriculum in public schools ("KIDSMART: What we do," 2012). The creation of EITA involved getting feedback and input from two community members, two parent advocates, a child psychologist, and ten classroom teachers.

### **Elements of EITA**

Working in small groups for 60 minutes once a week, students can take small, logical steps towards ownership of their social emotional learning. Each session of EITA encourages students to work toward three major yearlong objectives:

- Expressing oneself in words and art
- Working as an ensemble
- Recognizing one's own work as unique and special

Students know they are working on these objectives from the beginning of the program, so that every time they demonstrate healthy social emotional habits during a session, the teacher can point to which objective they are exhibiting.

For many students, just engaging in a lesson for 60 minutes is an enormous feat. Early lessons, therefore, are simple and highly experiential, with very little teacher talk, and an emphasis on small triumphs. For example, a student who shares a pair of scissors, or says "please" before grabbing a sheet of paper, should be recognized and celebrated in front of the group. The first major goal of group sessions is for all students to be at least somewhat engaged or participatory in the lesson.

Each session is broken into four parts:

- A circle or check-in ritual, where students acknowledge themselves and each other as part of a larger ensemble. This section usually includes a non-mandatory group warm-up game that engages the group as a singular unit and encourages students to work together.
- Introduction to art concepts and materials. Materials are unveiled and students pass them around, ensuring that senses are engaged. The teacher does little; students suggest how materials should be used safely and respectfully, sometimes in pairs, and sometimes as a whole group. The teacher talks about a simple art concept, such as varying shapes to create texture, that can be covered in five minutes or so, to diminish teacher talk.
- A visual art or theatre project. Unlike many classes taught in a traditional school setting, the student-driven artistic creation portion takes up 80 percent of the class time. Students are encouraged to explore and self-discover. They investigate materials and techniques on their own, without being reprimanded for being wrong or not understanding an artistic practice.
- A presentation of work completed. This can be done in pairs or as a circle, depending on the ability level of the group. At first, pairs are used frequently to cut down on listening time. Eventually, students learn to patiently listen more, and full group presentations become more common.

Sections of the sessions can be segmented, shortened, or revised at a teacher's discretion, although spending at least a full hour engaged in experiential learning can be deeply rewarding and therapeutic to students who struggle to participate in the general education setting.

### **EITA Units**

EITA is offered in four five-week units to be taught throughout the year. Each unit seeks to answer one essential question that guides the lessons, although the three major yearlong objectives are addressed throughout the year. The order of the units is intentional: each subsequent objective relies on prerequisite foundational skills taught in previous units.

Although social emotional learning is a continuum, with all skills constantly and simultaneously in practice, many skills depend on others. Just as a student must have phonological awareness to read sentences fluently, she must possess self-awareness in order to successfully build complex and loving relationships with others.

Units are built around multi-week projects, which take the duration of the unit to complete. With five weeks to complete a project students can develop many integral social and emotional skills. Students have to be willing to show patience and perseverance, and they must maintain investment in just one project over the course of extended periods of time. Because students are working on projects that are self-initiated and self-focused, they remain invested to complete the projects. Within this framework, students learn how different artistic elements can contribute to a larger, more complex completed work. For example, an early project is to create small collage works with multiple media (paper, cloth, cardboard) that symbolize parts of the human body. By the end of the project, students combine all of the small collages to create a much larger collage, which demonstrates how the strategies artists use in collage-making can be combined and synthesized to create larger works with composite textures and patterns.

**Unit One: *Who am I?*** The theme of the first unit is on self-awareness and recognition of one's unique differences. Students spend the entire unit learning about the elements of collage, using increasingly complex materials and techniques (such as scrunching, tearing, and scaling). The unit project is a full-scale self-portrait, complete with head, body, and "heart object," created entirely from collage materials. The theme encourages students to begin to feel proud of their work through presentation. Students become accustomed to showing their work to the group and accepting compliments from teachers and peers (no constructive criticism is used, instead, the emphasis is on seeing the positive in every work). By the end of the unit, students are making positive comments about their own work, citing elements of their art that make them feel proud.

**Unit Two: *How do I feel?*** Psychologists Mayer and Salovey (1993, 1997) initially proposed that the primary characteristic of people with high emotional intelligence was their ability to accurately identify emotions and judge whether an expression of emotion was honest.

This unit focuses on emotional literacy, and a grasp of the seven major human emotions: joy, fear, anger, sadness, surprise, and disgust, as identified by Izard (1971), a seminal scholar in human emotions. Major violent conflict at school can be avoided if students feel equipped with the language to express how they are feeling. The unit project is a set of emotions masks that students create and add sounds and motions resulting in a class-wide theatrical performance. The project also helps students to begin to grow comfortable working as an ensemble.

**Unit Three: *How do I solve my problems?*** Conflict-resolution is a personal skill constantly needed in day-to-day life, both at school and home. Being able to identify a problem and solve it safely engages students in the kinds of critical thinking skills they will need for their entire lives. This unit focuses on encouraging students to take ownership of their actions, and to seek solutions to tricky problems they may face at school, from bullying to attention deficit to cognitive frustration. The unit project is a “guide to life” book that includes students’ paintings of difficult scenarios in their day-to-day lives, and their proposals for solutions.

**Unit Four: *How can I work with others?*** Once students have established foundational skills necessary for success in their day-to-day lives, they can begin to work collaboratively. The unit project is a life-scale sculpture of an emotions “monster” that students create together, and collaboratively decide its use. The “monster” is constructed from chicken wire and corrugated cardboard, and is then covered in papier mâché. The students paint it collaboratively and add facial features made of modeling clay, painted cardboard, and paper constructions. A group of students might decide to put the “monster” in the school library to “watch” over readers, or to keep it as a reference in the special education classroom.

### **Initial Results of EITA**

In the 2011–2012 school year, the first year data was collected, results were gathered on total behavioral referrals by EITA participating students, that is, referrals sent by teachers to the principal signifying that the student needed to be removed from the classroom due to significant behavior infractions. The study group included eight students: two in first grade, two in second grade, and four in third grade. Half the students in the group had Individual

Education Plans and were identified as having EBD; the other half had accumulated the highest number of behavior referrals in their grade. Altogether, the students entered the group with a mean average of 24 behavior referrals per month, which was more than one referral for every school day. The student who entered the group with the most behavior referrals had received 31 referrals in the month of September.

By May, the average amount of monthly behavioral referrals for the group was down to four. Three of the students in the group (two of whom had IEPs for EBD) received no behavioral referrals at all for the month of March. One of the students identified as having EBD was moved from a self-contained setting for students with EBD into a full inclusion setting, and had extended her school day from four hours to six.

Students' work was evaluated using a rubric that attempted to measure four main components over the course of the school year: emotional expression, ensemble work, self-acceptance, and art habits (see Appendix A). The rubric ranged from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating a complete deficiency in the skill area, and 4 indicating mastery of the skill area. After the first session, students received an average score of 1.8 in emotional expression, 1.2 in ensemble work, 1.2 in self-acceptance, and 2.3 in art habits. By the final session in May, students scored an average of 3.5 in emotional expression, 3.0 in ensemble work, 3.0 in self-acceptance, and 3.8 in art habits.

When students spoke in individual interviews about their successes, they unanimously recited the three yearlong class objectives, (a) expressing oneself in words and art, (b) working as an ensemble, and (c) recognizing one's own work as unique and special, which they started practicing during the first session. Daniel (see Footnote 1), age nine years old, said, "I just really love making art. I didn't used to think I was good at really anything before, but I am really good at making different kinds of lines. That's something that makes me unique. I was the only one in our class who could do more than 50 types of lines. That just makes me calm. I feel like I can just draw lines when I get frustrated." Daniel's comments demonstrate a firm grasp of the third objective, since he now sees the value in his own work. Ann (see Footnote 1), age seven years old, said, "Working as an ensemble means you are working together like a team. You do



that with all games. Like the elephant game, where I had to be an elephant. You can't play the elephant game if you don't work in an ensemble." Ann's comment shows her ownership and grasp of the second objective: being able to work as an ensemble. Other students used the word "calm" as well, citing the soothing quality of creating art in any setting.

Data from the EITA program indicated that students benefited from engagement in arts integrated social emotional learning. While students demonstrated marked improvements in behaviors when participating in EITA, there was not an element of control for other variables that might have contributed to student success. Hence, the EITA program might not have been the only influence on improved behaviors, but there are strong indicators that its intended goals were met.

### **Conclusions**

Targeted arts-integrated instruction for students with EBD and behavioral differences has dramatic effects on how students experience school as a whole. The success participants have in small groups engaging in experiential, arts-based learning translates to the general education setting, and students begin to focus on academic subjects as well as arts subjects.

The majority of students with EBD thrive when they are given structured, safe, artistic freedom to create. They begin to demonstrate pride in their work, and they are able to translate that self-respect into other parts of their lives. Students provided with arts-integrated sessions that include ample time for student work and exploration, small group instruction, celebration of engagement as success, minimization of teacher talk, explicit vocabulary building around emotional language, and role-playing, can improve behaviorally enough to integrate successfully into general education settings.

## Appendix A

RubiStar Rubric Made Using:  
**RubiStar** (<http://rubistar.4teachers.org>)

### Collaborative Work Skills: Emotional Intelligence Through Art

Teacher Name: **Ms. Johnson**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Emotional Expression</b>	Student expressed herself if and when she was feeling uncomfortable using complex sentences that included feeling words. She spoke with an adult or a peer about her feelings, and created a complete work of art that showed knowledge of her emotional state.	Student expressed herself using words if and when she was feeling uncomfortable. She used at least one feeling word (including comfortable or uncomfortable), and created a complete work of art.	Student may have used words to express an emotion, but did not necessarily use feeling words, or convey her emotion effectively to an adult or peer. She created a complete work of art.	Student was withdrawn and did not attempt to communicate her emotions.
<b>Ensemble Work</b>	Student worked with other students in the group as a leader and/or as an active and listening group member. She helped delegate group tasks. She said please and thank you and volunteered to help others when she noticed they needed help.	Student was an active group member. She said please and thank you and volunteered to help others when she noticed they needed help.	Student occasionally worked with the group. She said please and thank you most of the time and was able to share sometimes.	Student refused to participate with the group.

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Self-Acceptance</b>	Student displayed pride for her own work by giving it compliments when prompted, or offered optimistic ideas of how she might wish to make it better in the future. She created a work that was unique and all its own—she did not copy off a sample, but showed confidence in creating her own details.	Student was positive about her work when prompted. She created a work that was unique—she added her own details.	Student was neutral about her work when prompted. She may have copied many elements of her work from a sample or a neighbor.	Student said negative things about her work, or asked for excessive assistance in creating it.
<b>Art Habits</b>	Student demonstrated understanding of the art objective in conversation or during a written check-out. She applied knowledge of the art concept to her work. She used supplies respectfully, and cleaned up when the session was finished.	Student demonstrated understanding of the art objective in conversation or during a written check-out. She mostly used supplies respectfully, and cleaned up when the session was finished.	Student demonstrated partial understanding of the art objective in conversation or during a written check-out. She sometimes used supplies respectfully, and partially cleaned up when the session was finished.	Student did not demonstrate understanding of the art objective. She was disrespectful to supplies and did not clean up upon prompting.

Date Created: **Nov 04, 2013 08:19 am (CST)**

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# Fostering Resilience in an Intergenerational Art and Literacy Program for Homeless Families: An Analysis of Curriculum<sup>1</sup>

DONALYN HEISE AND LAURIE MACGILLIVRAY<sup>2</sup>

There is a dearth of information about specific ways curriculum can address resilience with families with special needs. In this paper, we focus on the way an art and literacy program at a shelter for homeless families fostered *resilience* (defined below). To develop the curriculum for the program we drew on our previous experiences at this shelter (Heise & MacGillivray, 2011; MacGillivray, Ardell, & Curwen, 2010b), our work with families with special needs across multiple school and community-based programs, and related literature. The following research question guided our inquiry: *What are ways to address resilience in the curriculum of an art and literacy program?* This paper builds on existing research addressing the potential of art to serve families with special needs. For the purposes of this paper, the term “special needs” indicates families dealing with a myriad of obstacles surrounding homelessness. This population experiences a high percentage of students with disabilities (Wilder Research, 2013). This paper represents one aspect of our research on the nature of interactions surrounding an intergenerational arts and literacy program.

Homelessness cuts across ethnicity, social class and parental age, however mothers are overwhelmingly the head of household (US Conference of Mayors, 2012). A range of causes lead a family to become homeless including unaffordable housing, low wages/lack of job opportunities, loss of job, and lack of health care insurance (US Conference of Mayors, 2012). However further reasons are hopelessly commingled and include mental, physical, and social health issues; drug/alcohol addiction; spousal abuse; incarceration of a parent, and natural disasters (Larson & Meehan, 2011; Wilder Research, 2013). The ramifications for children include: a higher rate of physical and mental illness, a rise in school mobility, increased grade retention (Rafferty, Shinn, & Weitzman, 2004; Stronge, 2002), poor academic achievement (Noll & Watkins, 2003; Sinatra, 2007; Cutuli, Desjardins, Herbers, Long, Heistad, Chan, Hinz,

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<sup>1</sup> This research was a collaboration of the Salvation Army Renewal Place and The University of Memphis, generously supported by a Strengthening Communities Capacity-Building Grant. We appreciate the efforts and expertise of lead teachers, Judy Pace and Gretchen Skypeck who played an essential role in this program.

<sup>2</sup> The authors contributed equally to this paper.

& Masten, 2013; Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008) and an increased likelihood of placement in special education (Larson & Meehan, 2011). In fact, half of homeless mothers reported having at least one school-age child with learning problems (Wilder Research, 2013).

Mobility is one of the key barriers to assessment and access to special services. One study found 45% of sheltered homeless children warranted special education evaluation; however, only 1/4 of those had received any testing or services at all (Zima, Bussing, Forness, & Benjamin, 1997). It is not unusual for a child to be assessed and special education deemed appropriate yet the paperwork needed to implement the placement is not available for several months. The family relocates and the child fails to receive needed specialized services (MacGillivray, Ardell, & Curwen, 2010a; 2010b). However, schools across the country are trying to be responsive to homeless children by: (a) designating a specific person to spearhead services; (b) offering services such as transportation to the home school to allow for school stability; (c) offering more timely health, mental, and academic assessments; and (4) improving communication between schools within and across districts (Gargiulo, 2006; MacGillivray et al., 2010a; Sinatra, 2007).

Shelters can be “safe havens” for families who are experiencing homelessness. Although they provide much needed stability, families still face difficulties (Herman, 1997). Living side-by-side with other families experiencing crisis and having to follow strict shelter guidelines can be challenging (MacGillivray et al., 2010a; 2010b). Mothers in shelters for families who are homeless are often strategic about accessing services. These skills are essential for obtaining and maintaining residence. Mothers often use free resources such as those offered by churches and schools to support their family emotionally and academically (MacGillivray et al., 2010b).

Children also develop strategies for handling life in a shelter, such as talking about religious practices as a way to make an immediate connection with new acquaintances (MacGillivray, et al., 2010a). The instability of homeless children’s lives requires care be taken so assessments are accurate and outcomes are not reflective of a short-term situation. This is particularly important for families in need of long-term special education services. We assert



teaching children and parents about resilience is one way to address the negative events in their lives (Heise, 2013).

This qualitative research examines an intergenerational art and literacy program designed to foster resilience in children and their mothers who are residing in a family homeless shelter for mothers who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. We begin with a review of the research on resilience, family resilience specifically, and art-related curriculum. We then describe the context and population, the art and literacy program curriculum, the methodology, and our findings. This is followed by a discussion of the attributes of the curriculum that develop resilience.

## Related Literature

### Resilience

Werner and Smith's (1992) foundational longitudinal study with youth who were considered at-risk led to resilience research that focuses on how and why some people struggle when exposed to high risk while others experience positive adaptation (Reed-Victor & Stronge 2002). *Resilience* is defined in the literature as the ability to cope despite adversity (Benard, 1991; Heise, 2013; Krovetz, 2007) and adjust positively to challenging life conditions. With a similar focus, Masten (2001) defined resilience as "a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development" (p. 228). Threats to human development can affect positive adaptation. For resilience to occur, two things must be present: *risk* and *positive adaptation*. *Risks* can include challenges associated with physical disabilities, social and emotional distress, exposure to violence, trauma associated with natural or environmental disasters, poverty, abuse or neglect. Resilience in children is often associated with positive academic outcomes and social emotional well-being (Werner, 2005).

Resilience is a dynamic construct, not a fixed trait (Heise, 2013; Ibeagha, Balogun, & Adejuwon, 2004; Rutter, 2012). It is not something one is born with, but something that can be developed over time. It involves repeated thoughts and actions that deepen the ability to adapt to life-threatening events. Resilience is cumulative; repeated successful adaptation despite exposure to risks contributes to positive outcomes in the future (Heise, 2013; Rutter, 2012).

However, literature in the field revealed challenges in conceptualizing resilience (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). Some researchers referred to resilience as a concept or construct (Lietz, 2007; Luthar, et al., 2000). Masten (2001) and Benard (1991,1993) considered resilience a phenomenon, while others called it a condition (Knight, 2007). Some used the term *attributes* (Benard, 1991, 1993; Bosworth & Walz, 2005; Krovetz, 2007), *characteristics* (Reed-Victor & Stronge, 2002; Werner, 2005), and *external factors* and/or *environmental factors* (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Reed-Victor & Stronge, 2002). Further confusion is fueled when labels are categorized in multiple ways. For instance, Garmezy (1993) categorized resilience into *individual*, *family* and *external support*, some (Luthar et al., 2000), distinguished between *individual protective factors* and *contextual protective factors* while others (Brendtro & Larson, 2006) included *environmental factors*.

After examining numerous articles on resilience in the field, we discovered common lists of attributes that are believed to be protective factors that foster resilience. The attributes that appeared most often were *a sense of community* (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1992), *a sense of purpose* (Seligman, Steen, & Part, 2005), *communication skills* (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1992), *creativity* (Wolin & Wolin, 1993), *flexibility* (Chen & Kovacs, 2013), *humor* (Lietz, 2007), *metacognition* (Luthar et al., 2000), *optimism* (Herrman, Stewart, Diaz-Granados, Berger, Jackson, & Yuen, 2011), *persistence* (Benard, 1991, 1993), *personal accomplishment* (Rutter, 1987), *problem solving ability* (Werner, 2005), *resourcefulness* (Krovetz, 2007) and *vision for the future* (Knight, 2007). There were also common (recurring) external factors that were sometimes referred to in the literature as environmental factors that foster resilience. These included *opportunities for meaningful participation* (Krovetz, 2007), *nurturing caring environment* (Benard, 1991, 1993), *family recreation* (Black and Lobo, 2008), *routines and rituals* (Wolin & Wolin, 1993).

Recent theoretical and empirical research also suggests the ability to attach meaning to an experience contributes to successful coping as does the ability to learn from the experience (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006; Everly, Smith, & Lating, 2009; Heise, 2013). When children engage in creative activities and experience personal satisfaction from mastery of skills or joy of exploration, they are less likely to dwell on negative events in their lives (Chen & Kovacs, 2013;

Werner, 2005). This concept relates to what is sometimes referred to as the “Compensatory Effect,” an intervention strategy that is based on the idea if you add more assets or resources to a child’s life, they can counterbalance the negative effects (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984).

In addition to individual attributes, studies suggest *family competence* is strongly associated with resilience. Family resilience refers to positive behavioral patterns and functional competence that encourages well-being and enables families to cope or recover from crises (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996; Walsh, 1996). Being flexible and thereby able to adapt to stressful conditions is considered to be a strength of resilient families (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996; Trivette, Dunst, Deal, Hamer, & Propst, 1990). Lietz (2007) considered focusing on developing strengths, especially with high-risk families such as those experiencing homelessness, as more important than emphasizing reducing risks. She suggested interventions such as *modeling humor, teaching boundary setting, and encouraging problem solving* can increase resilience. Similarly, Chen and Kovacs (2013) suggested practices that help families discover resources and abilities develop family relationships and social supports and, in turn, enhance communication. Black and Lobo (2008) identified characteristics of resilient families as *positive outlook, spirituality, flexibility, and joint problem solving*.

Across the work on individual and family resilience, there is an emphasis on building on strengths as a way to face adversity. The families in the Art and Literacy Program have faced many obstacles and will face more in the future. The research on resilience suggests that developing families’ current coping strategies increases their resilience particularly with children with special needs.

### **Art Curriculum**

A review of literature revealed an emphasis on designing art curriculum that moves beyond focusing solely on principles and elements of design and towards a more comprehensive approach that links learning to real life (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Gude, 2007). Wiggins and McTighe (2005) advocated curricula centered on essential understandings or enduring ideas. Walker (2001) addressed art curricula specifically and advocated the concept of deeper understanding and thematic inquiry to promote meaningful learning.

Art is recognized as an avenue to develop multiple skills and abilities, as well as nurture cognitive, social, and personal development (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Fiske, 2000). Art education curriculum lends itself to a resilience approach. Quality arts education allows for personal creative expression that can engage and empower students to generate new insights into their lives (Heise, 2013). A resilience approach to curriculum development focuses on strengthening protective factors that are believed to contribute to positive outcomes. This is especially relevant with families with special needs because art can be used to construct and express personal meanings and help children and adults understand themselves and their world (Gerber & Guay, 2006). Art education, at its best, emphasizes access to art for all students, differentiated instruction, pedagogy that allows choices in the learning process, and collaborative partnerships for meeting the diverse needs of all students (Gerber & Guay, 2006; Hunter & Johns, 2006).

Although there are ample studies on resilience, there is a lack of research focusing on resilience and art for families with special needs. Our research used a resilience framework to design and implement a program focusing on individual and family strengths. In this paper, we analyze the ways resilience theory was embedded in the curriculum of an art and literacy program in a shelter for families who are homeless.

### **Context and Population**

Our population consisted of mothers and children who were residing in the Salvation Army Renewal Place shelter, a multifaceted two-year program that offers residents support with 12-step programs, therapy, financial support, and parenting classes. There are three requirements for women to enter the program: they must be homeless; have custody of a child who is under the age of 10; and be addicted to drugs/alcohol. There are three goals for each mother: maintain a residence; hold down a job; and develop positive parenting skills. There are typically 12 mothers with two to four children in their custody. Each family has a room and private bathroom off of one long hall. There is one common room where meetings take place and families spend time on the weekends. All meals are offered in a cafeteria.

The women range in age from 18 to 45, are typically African American or White. The mothers have a range of educational experiences from completing 10th grade to obtaining

an advanced degree. Initially the women must stay “on the floor” and intensely focus on becoming and remaining clean and sober. Over time they begin to participate in schooling and 12-step programs around the city.

The children in the shelter range in age from newborns to the age of 10. However, for the Art and Literacy Program they needed to be six years of age or older. Many of the children are just being reunited with their mothers after living with friends and families or being in a foster home. For some women, entering the program was a condition of being able to have custody of their children. For many children, the physical instability and emotional upheavals are evident in their academics (See Table 1 for Children’s Demographics).

There is a caseworker assigned just for the children. Her focus is two-pronged: first to develop positive parenting skills through modeling and explicit teaching; and second, to oversee the children’s academic success and physical/mental health. The mothers are expected to have a close relationship with the children’s teachers and to be active in any educational decisions. It is not uncommon for the caseworker to attend meetings at the school with the mothers (and stand in when mothers are unavailable) to monitor the children’s progress. She works especially closely with the mothers when special services are being considered. Staff members believe a mother’s ability to play an active role in IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings is a hallmark of successful parenting.

### **Curriculum Description**

The goal for the intergenerational art and literacy program was to develop participants’ understanding of resilience and create a non-academic space for mothers and children to read, write, and create art. In collaboration with staff at the Salvation Army we designed the broad scope of the curriculum. Together we decided to use a resilience framework and the overarching theme for the program, *Finding Beauty in Unexpected Places*. We felt these would be particularly appropriate for families who have faced many obstacles and may not be aware of their strengths and, relatedly, may need to develop the ability to literally find the beauty around them.

The curriculum included a variety of art media (pencil, markers, clay, paper) and art production (drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpting, collage, collaborative sculptures). The content also addressed aesthetics and the language of art. The literacy components encompassed reading children’s literature, creating shape poems, and keeping a journal, reflecting on sticky notes, and creating a collaborative book.

Seventeen lesson plans were developed over the span of the program and included three field trips (See Table 2 for Curriculum Overview). Five sessions were held in the fall. This time was used to build relationships and explore the best way to implement an art and literacy program and determine which attributes of resilience were most relevant in this context. We met with the mothers prior to implementation and continued to draw on their insights throughout the program.

In the spring, teachers were hired to work collaboratively with us to develop and implement 12 sessions, including the three field trips. The lesson plans were detailed and thoughtful. In a traditional classroom, curriculum would be guided by state and national academic standards. In this informal setting, we created an integrated framework that connected developing individual and family social/emotional well-being with attention to nurturing positive experiences with reading, writing, and creating art. University students assisted in the implementation of the program.

The curriculum drew from literature related to art, literacy, and special education to focus on factors of resilience deemed most relevant to our specific population: (a) *a sense of community*; (b) *a sense of humor*; (c) *a sense of purpose*; (d) *creativity*; (e) *communication skills*; (f) *optimism*; (g) *persistence*; (h) *personal accomplishment*; (i) *positive outlook*; (j) *problem solving*; (k) *resourcefulness*; (l) *metacognition*; and (m) *vision for the future*. We operationalize *a sense of community* as perceived social bonding and interdependence with others, and *a sense of humor* as the ability to laugh even in the face of adversity.

We define *a sense of purpose* as the ability to see something larger than yourself. *Creativity* is considered the ability to think of new and original things, to find multiple solutions to problems and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances (flexibility and fluency).

*Communication skills* include effective use of visual and verbal language to express thoughts and ideas. *Optimism* is a positive outlook or positive attitude. *Persistence* is defined as solving a problem without giving up, persevering despite challenges. *Personal accomplishment* relates to individual pride in something achieved or successfully completed. *Positive outlook* includes a positive expectation for the future. *Problem solving* is defined as the mental and physical processes in solving problems. *Resourcefulness* requires finding and using resources. *Metacognition* is the awareness or analysis of one's own learning or thinking processes. *Vision for the future* encompasses focusing on something beyond the present.

Three field trips were part of the curriculum (Sessions 7, 8, & 11) and extended the learning and supported the theme of *Finding Beauty in Unexpected Places*. The first field trip was to a recycle center to provide opportunity to learn about recycled, reused, and repurposed materials. The second was a trip to the National Ornamental Metal Museum to observe metal artists creating in the smithy and foundry and for participants to create metal engravings. The focus of these field trips was developing *creativity* and *resourcefulness*. The final field trip was to the art gallery on the University of Memphis campus for the exhibition of the participants' creative work. Developing a *sense of personal accomplishment* and *vision for the future* were the attributes emphasized on this field trip.

### Methodology

This was a qualitative case study grounded in sociocultural theory. Our findings were situated in a specific context with a particular population. Both researchers examined each lesson plan asking, "What are the ways the curriculum addressed resilience?" The first step of the process required going back into the literature on resilience to review attributes. Our analysis found the curriculum addressed some attributes that were not explicitly targeted in the lessons. As we analyzed the curriculum we continued to hone the factors of resilience.

Ultimately we arrived at the following list of attributes that participants had an opportunity to develop during the program: (a) *a sense of community*; (b) *a sense of humor*; (c) *a sense of a literate self*; (d) *a sense of personal accomplishment*; (e) *a sense of purpose*; (f) *creativity*; (g) *optimism*; (h) *persistence*; (i) *resourcefulness*; and (j) *vision for the future*. We

developed an additional term because interactions with print were central to the curriculum and the only related term in the literature was *communication*, which seemed too broad. Thus we decided to add our own term, “*a sense of a literate self*” to document interactions with text because feeling confident as a reader or writer is an attribute of resilience. The term included consuming (reading) and creating (writing) text. But we also included acts of emergent literacy. For example, we considered creating a picture on a Sticky note in response to a prompt as the behavior of a writer.

After deciding on the most relevant attributes of resilience and adding *a sense of a literate self*, we returned to the lesson plans to analyze the relationship between the curriculum and resilience. A “constant comparison method” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used throughout the process. Data were reviewed and analyzed during multiple iterations (Yin, 1994) in an effort to determine attributes of resilience and also the most telling aspect of the curriculum.

Ultimately, the analysis showed that four weekly components best captured the relationship between resilience and the curriculum. (a) “Art Activities” referred to the “art” project of the week and tended to be the main focus of each lesson plan. (b) “Sticky notes” entailed a process of reflection which was guided by a prompt related to the curriculum, such as “Draw/write something you like about your family or a family celebration.” Participants took two and responded in the same way on both sticky notes, placed one in their personal journal and the other on a community bulletin board. (c) “Interactive Read Alouds” occurred each week, either before or after the “art activity.” The lesson plans called for a teacher-led discussion among mothers and children around predictions and personal connections to the text. (d) “Book Check Out” was a weekly event with children and mothers checking out books from a large selection of children’s literature.

### Findings

The findings demonstrated the way the curriculum supported resilience through varied content and a range of activities. Participants were given opportunities to develop a range of attributes of resilience that in turn aid in facing adversity. We present the findings through



an analysis of four key components of the program (see Table 3 for an Analysis of Resilience Attributes by Key Components). We also found it helpful to differentiate the process and the content within each component. The process of each component, such as the act of creating art, responding to prompts on sticky notes, and interacting with literature, afforded the opportunity to develop many attributes of resilience. The content (reflected in the theme, guiding question, and the sticky note prompts of each of these activities) created a chance to develop further attributes. The findings are structured so the connection between the curriculum and resilience is evident both across key components and within individual lessons. Below we highlight aspects of the findings. When examined together, Tables 2 and 3 offer details of the curriculum and findings.

### **Art Activities**

The process of the “Art Activities” offered participants a chance to develop *a sense of accomplishment, a sense of community, creativity, persistence, and resourcefulness* because it demanded manipulating and sharing recycled materials to complete the art activity. For example, participants made name collages the first two weeks by tearing and gluing paper that they previously painted. The creation of the name collage in and of itself offered a chance to develop these attributes of resilience. At one point after paper had been painted, participants exchanged torn pieces of paper with their peers and used these in their own collages. In this way *a sense of community* was nurtured.

In contrast to the process of the task, the content led participants to develop other attributes. This was evident in all of the activities. For example, a focus on the meaning of names and family stories in conjunction with making the name collages nurtured the additional attribute of developing *a sense of purpose*. Making necklaces with recycled materials also offered the opportunity to develop *a sense of purpose* when the activity was framed as a chance to think about how we can share with others. *A vision for the future* was addressed in a discussion about finding balance in one’s own life during the creation of butterflies from 3D paper sculpture made from recycled paper.

### **Sticky Notes**

The process of responding to prompts on sticky notes placed in a personal journal and a community bulletin board afforded the development of four attributes of resilience. This kind of composing required *creativity*. The completion of the sticky notes developed a *sense of personal accomplishment* and a *sense of a literate self*. Posting one's writing alongside that of others offered a *sense of community*. However, the content of prompts for the sticky notes increased the number of connections to resilience. For example, the sticky notes in five of the nine lessons included an opportunity to develop a *sense of optimism*. Prompts such as: "Draw or write something you like about your family or family celebrations;" "Draw or write something you would like to repeat;" and "Select an empowering word" encouraged viewing the world in a positive way. Only two (*resourcefulness* and *persistence*) of the attributes were not addressed in the process and content of the sticky notes. Based on this analysis, we know they could have been addressed with a related prompt if this was deemed desirable.

### **Interactive Read Alouds**

Overall, the analysis found that all 10 attributes were connected with at least one of the "Interactive Read Alouds." The nature of "Interactive Read Alouds" supported a *sense of community*, a *sense of a literate self*, and *creativity*. Gathering together to hear and discuss a children's picture storybook led to rich group discussions. Participating in a text-centered activity was an opportunity to act like both a reader and writer. The content of individual books supported further attributes including *humor*, a *sense of purpose*, and *vision for the future*. For example, *The Magnificent Monarchs* by Linda Glaser, in the fifth lesson focused on the long flight of the butterflies emphasized by studying a map of their flight. The content of this "Interactive Read Aloud" invited participants to appreciate something larger than themselves.

### **Book Check Out**

With "Book Check Out" we coded only for the process of this component because the collection of available books included a wide range of topics. Many books were perused during book selection time so examining checkout records would not accurately reflect the families' interaction with print. This activity was the only one in which the mothers and children needed to make decisions together. Either the families looked through the books together or

each child would select a book and show it to her/his mother for approval. Finding the right book was an opportunity to experience *a sense of personal accomplishment*. The very act of checking out a book offered an opportunity to develop *optimism, a sense of community, and a vision for the future* rooted in a tacit commitment to read the books individually and/or together.

## **Discussion**

This analysis reveals the breadth of the relationship between the curriculum of an art and literacy program and resilience. There were a number of opportunities for participants to develop attributes of resilience that we did not foresee when we were developing the curriculum. Each lesson had been designed to focus on a single attribute. However, analysis indicated an array of attributes was addressed.

First, specific art processes offered an opportunity to develop a wider range of the attributes of resilience because of the talk that surrounded the activity. This extends the research on meaningful and thematic art curriculum (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Gude, 2007; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) to include a resilience framework as a way to connect art to life. For example, the act of making prints allowed for a connection to be made between repetition and exploring what is worth repeating in one's life. Similarly, painting boxes moved beyond the skill of painting, into a reflection on a vision for one's self and family. The nature of the art activities made the connection to larger themes possible. Thus for us we kept the resilience theme in the forefront of our minds as we designed the activities. Especially for families with special needs, these kinds of thoughtful art lessons can encourage *creativity, develop self-esteem, and establish a sense of community*.

Second, literacy activities that focused on process and reflection were associated with a greater number of resilience attributes. The curriculum tied to resiliency was in the diversity of ways participants' interacted with text. During curriculum design we focused primarily on the "Art Activities" and "Interactive Read Alouds." However, most of the attributes of resilience were associated with the process and/or content of the sticky notes. The opportunities to use text and pictures for reflection were particularly important for families in the Renewal Place

program because there can often be an overwhelming number of time consuming mandated tasks associated with living in a shelter (MacGillivray, 2010; MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, 2010a; 2010b). The sticky notes afforded participants a chance to pause and commit their own thoughts to paper. Having a private place to post their ideas is a luxury in a homeless shelter where families share one room. In contrast, posting their sticky note publicly alongside others develops a *sense of community*. For families who have moved numerous times, nurturing relationships is crucial

Third, the role of the “Book Checkout” also related to more of the resilient attributes than first imagined. The development of a *sense of a literate self* nurtured resilience as well as other attributes such as a *sense of community* and *vision for the future*. Allowing children to select their own books is consistent with Gerber & Guay’s (2006) emphasis on the importance of choice-making in the learning process for diverse learners and was particularly important with children who are homeless. Upon further reflection we realized how “Book Checkout” allowed families to connect. It was not solely an issue of leaving the session with a book, but rather the tacit commitment to read together during the week. This activity was particularly important to a family torn apart due to a mother’s addiction. Reading books together can be a positive way for families to spend time. Checking out engaging children’s literature increases the chance of constructive family interactions.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the way the curriculum of an art and literacy program used a framework of resilience theory. As colleagues, we drew from each other’s specialties of art and literacy to design a community-based program with a particular audience in mind. Because each family who experiences homelessness faces their own unique constellation of risks, it was especially important to have open-ended art and literacy activities that allowed for children and mothers to respond in a variety of ways. The attention to resilience afforded the opportunity for individuals and families to reflect on their strengths and imagine optimistic futures.

In this paper, we extend the work of art educators who have established the need for connecting art to life (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Gude, 2007). Rather than encouraging this curriculum be replicated in another setting, we offer it as a model for other community-based

programs to use a resilience framework to guide their own program design. This research also demonstrates the way themes, such as *Finding Beauty in Unexpected Places*, can enhance curriculum in powerful ways by emphasizing reflection and, specifically, positive ways to examine the world. We are excited about the prospect of working with other community-based groups as they design strengths-based programs. Developing curriculum with a resilience framework can increase access to and engagement in quality arts education in communities and schools.

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READ ALOUDS

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**Table 1**

Characteristics of Children at Renewal Place Who Participated in the Art and Literacy Program (ALP)

N=20								
Attended ALP without parent*	Previously lived with extended family/friends	Previously lived in Foster care	IEP Gifted	IEP Learning	IEP Behavioral	School frequently requested parent conference due to child's behavior	Attends Group Therapy	Attends Individual Therapy
5	20	9	1	9	8	15	18	5
25%	100%	45%	5%	45%	40%	75%	90%	25%
*3 additional children attended some sessions w/o parent								
**Total number of students with IEPs = 9								

**Table 2**  
Curriculum Overview of Art and Literacy Program

LESSON	KEY COMPONENTS
<p><b>Lesson plan 1</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Recognizing strengths</p> <p><b>Essential Questions:</b> What does your name mean? Where does it come from? Is it a family name? How does your name make you feel? Why?</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Collages (painted and torn paper)</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> Write/Draw/share your name or something you like about it</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>You Can Make a Collage: A Very Simple How-to Book</i> by Eric Carle</p>
<p><b>Lesson plan 2</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Recognizing strengths and Finding beauty in unexpected places Listed on lesson plan Lesson</p> <p><b>Essential Question:</b> What are some of your strengths?</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Completing name collages</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> Draw/write something you like about your family or a family celebration</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia</i> by Carmen Lomas Garza</p>
<p><b>Lesson Plan 3</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Repeating something</p> <p><b>Essential Questions:</b> What is worth repeating? Should we add “finding beauty around us” as a continuing theme?</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Prayer Flags (stamp, printing, painting)</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> What is worth repeating?</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>Poke in the Eye: A collection of concrete poems</i> by Paul Janeczko and Chris Raschka</p>
<p><b>Lesson Plan 4</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Sharing with others</p> <p><b>Essential Questions:</b> How can we share with others? If you were to share a message with someone, what would it be?</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Necklaces (writing and folding and tearing paper sculpture)</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> How can we share with others?</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>Pet Show!</i> By Ezra Jack Keats</p>
<p><b>Lesson Plan 5</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Balance</p> <p><b>Essential Question:</b> How can you find balance?</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Butterflies (symmetrical 3D paper sculpture with recycled torn painted paper)</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> What helps you find balance in your life?</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>Magnificent Monarchs</i> by Linda Glaser</p>

**Table 2 (continued)**

## Curriculum Overview of Art and Literacy Program

LESSON	KEY COMPONENTS
<p><b>Lesson Plan 6</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Finding beauty; Repurpose</p> <p><b>Essential Questions:</b> What is beauty? Where can you discover it?</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Chrysalis (painted sculpture with tissue paper and yarn)</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> write/draw an image which illustrates balance/ write about what helps to create balance</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>Ish</i> by Peter H. Reynolds</p>
<p><b>Lesson Plan 9</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Humor</p> <p><b>Essential Question:</b> What makes you happy?</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Funny animals (air dry clay using recycled objects to add texture)</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> Draw/Write about something funny</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>Stand Back Said the Elephant, I'm going to Sneeze!</i> By Patricia Thomas</p>
<p><b>Lesson Plan 10</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> How can we remain true to our vision?</p> <p><b>Essential Question:</b> How can you remain true to our vision?</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Boxes w "vision" words (painting, writing)</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> What word do you want to use to shape your vision? For yourself, your family, your community?</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>Wings</i> by Christopher Myer</p>
<p><b>Lesson Plan 12</b></p> <p><b>Theme:</b> Reflecting on finding beauty in unexpected places and resilience</p> <p><b>Essential Questions:</b> What is a moment you will remember? Why? (Tie into resilience, beauty, or family)</p>	<p><b>Art Activity:</b> Collaborative Accordion book (cutting, writing)</p> <p>You will write/draw about: what beauty you find in unexpected places.</p> <p><b>Sticky Note:</b> Select an empowering word from those provided</p> <p><b>Book:</b> <i>Beautiful Oops!</i> By Barney Saltzberg</p>

**Table 3**

Analysis of Resilience Attributes By Four Weekly Components

**Analysis of Resilience Attributes By Four Weekly Components**

<b>KEY COMPONENT – ART ACTIVITIES (Lesson Plans)</b>										
<i>(1) Name Collages, (2) Completing name collages, (3) Prayer Flags, (4) Necklaces, (5) Butterflies, (6) Paper Chrysalis, (9) Funny animals (air dry clay using recycled objects to add texture, (10) Boxes w “vision” words (painting, writing), (12) Collaborative Accordion book (cutting, writing)</i>										
Attributes	Creativity	Optimism	Persistence	Resourcefulness	Sense of Community	A Sense of Humor	A Sense of Literate Self	A Sense of Personal Accomplishment	Sense of Purpose	Vision for the future
<b>Lesson Plan(s)</b>	All	3, 10,12	All	All	All	9	1, 2,3, 4,10, 12	All	2,4, 10, 12	3,4,6, 10 12
<b>KEY COMPONENT – STICKY NOTES (Lesson Plans)</b>										
<i>(1) Write/Draw/Share your name or something you like about it”, (2) “Draw/Write something you like about your family or a family celebration, (3) “What is worth repeating?”, (4) “How can we share with others?”, (5) What helps you find balance in your life? (6) “Write/Draw an image which illustrates balance \ write about what helps to create balance”, (9) “Draw/Write about something funny”, (10) “What word do you want to use to shape your vision for yourself, your family, your community?”, (12) “Select an empowering word from those provided, write it on 2 sticky notes”</i>										
Attributes	Creativity	Optimism	Persistence	Resourcefulness	A Sense of Community	A Sense of Humor	A Sense of Literate Self	A Sense of Personal Accomplishment	A Sense of Purpose	Vision for the future
<b>Lesson Plan(s)</b>	All	2,3,4, 6, 9			All	9	All	All	4,6	2,3, 4,5,10
<b>KEY COMPONENT – INTERACTIVE READ ALOUDS (Lesson Plans)</b>										
<i>(1) You Can Make a Collage: A Very Simple How-to Book by Eric Carle, (2) Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia by Carmen Lomas Garza, (3) Poke in the Eye: A collection of concrete poems by Paul Janeczko and Chris Raschka, (4) Pet Show! by Ezra Jack Keats, (5) Magnificent Monarchs by Linda Glaser, (6) Ish by Peter H. Reynolds, (9) Stand Back Said the Elephant, I’m going to Sneeze! By Patricia Thomas, (10) Wings by Christopher Myers, (12) Beautiful Oops! by Barney Saltzberg</i>										
Attributes	Creativity	Optimism	Persistence	Resourcefulness	A Sense of Community	A Sense of Humor	A Sense of Literate Self	A Sense of Personal Accomplishment	A Sense of Purpose	Vision for the future
<b>Lesson Plan(s)</b>	All	2			All	9	All		5	4,6
<b>KEY COMPONENT – CHECKING OUT BOOKS (Lesson Plans)</b>										
<i>Individual and family check out books from a wide collection of children’s literature.</i>										
Attributes	Creativity	Optimism	Persistence	Resourcefulness	A Sense of Community	A Sense of Humor	A Sense of Literate Self	A Sense of Personal Accomplishment	A Sense of Purpose	Vision for the future
<b>Lesson Plan(s)</b>		All			All		All	All		All

# Reflections on Moore College of Art and Design's Master's Degree Program in Art Education with an Emphasis in Special Populations

LYNNE HOROSCHAK, KIM GAVIN, AND VERONICA HICKS

This paper begins with a description of a unique graduate program in art education developed by an experienced urban art educator. Moore College of Art & Design's program meshes with and contributes to the community. To illustrate this dynamic, the paper shifts, both generationally and in tone, to two students in Moore's program whose research addresses concerns of teachers in today's art classrooms. Kim Gavin describes the acquisition of language and literacy skills by special education students and English language learners (ELL) in the art room. Veronica Hicks writes about raising self-confidence in young women artists with special needs through art.

Moore College of Art & Design in Philadelphia houses the only known master's degree program in visual art and special education. The program, MA in Art Education with an Emphasis on Special Populations, serves as a model for preparing art teachers to work with students with disabilities both in inclusive and self-contained settings. The 30-credit program is built on the experience of Horoschak, who taught art to students with disabilities for over 30 years, and is designed to accommodate the working art teacher. The MA in Art Education with an Emphasis in Special Populations schedule has two summer intensive terms on campus with fall and spring terms on-line. The program can be completed in four terms.

Because art educators need to continually hone their skills as artists as well as educators, a studio intensive experience is built into the first summer term, with a studio provided to each graduate student. In addition to "Studio Intensives" in the first summer term, courses include "Curriculum Development" and "Contemporary Issues in Art Education." "Curriculum Development" begins immediately with hands on experiential learning with both children and adults with disabilities. Graduate students teach the individuals with disabilities in dyads. Working in pairs encourages brainstorming of ideas and brings a level of support for one another. Twice, they visit sites where children with disabilities learn. During the first visit,

they observe, ask questions, and take notes. During a follow-up visit, the graduate students teach an art lesson relevant to the individual's learning.

Adults with developmental disabilities come to the Galleries at Moore and the graduate students walk them through the exhibitions asking relevant, open-ended questions to help them explore the art. Examples of questions are "What do you see here?" "What colors are in this painting?" "Which are your favorites?" Drawing in the air stimulates the creativity of participants and engages them in the art they are seeing. Questions may need to be reworded in a moment's notice if a participant is having difficulty responding to the question. Following the "Gallery Walk and Talk," graduate students teach a lesson connected to art in the Gallery. Artwork from the lesson is displayed and celebrated with high fives and applause.

During "Contemporary Issues," students explore current educational practices through academic articles and guest lecturers who are leaders in their fields of expertise. Topics such as inclusion in a Philadelphia Public School art classroom, multicultural education with a focus on art teaching, and art teaching and learning in a New York Community Center for low income families are presented.

In the fall, the online courses are "Research Methodology" and "Technology for Special Education." During "Research Methodology," the students develop their chosen thesis question, conduct a literature review, and learn the methodology of Action Research (Mills, Gay, & Airasian, 2011).

Action Research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved. Action Research is research done *by teachers for themselves*. (p. 5)

During "Independent Research for Thesis" in the spring semester, data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Some students' theses titles for the spring of 2014 are: *The Element of Choice: Choice-Based Art Education in a Functional Skills Classroom*; *The Effects of a*



*Community-based Art Curriculum on Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disturbance; A Study of Culture and Identity through Art-Engaging Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorder; and Using Art to Encourage Student Voice and Critical Analysis at Harrington Elementary School.* "Assessment Strategies" is also taught during the spring semester. Students develop strategies to evaluate the learning of a student with disabilities from a special education teacher.

Three courses offered during the final summer term are "Legal Perspectives," "Visual Culture" and "Thesis." "Legal Perspectives," taught by a special education lawyer, helps students understand legal aspects of the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which pertains to all teachers of students with disabilities. "Visual Culture" rounds out the summer courses. This graduate seminar examines the theoretical, political, and aesthetic concerns that drive current trends in art, with a particular focus on art of the global present. Topics include globalization, place, language, memory, identity, institutional critique, and socially engaged art. Students in the "Thesis" class finish editing their theses and prepare the public presentations of their research findings. Following the presentation, an exhibition of the process of the graduates' theses studies is on display in the Galleries at Moore.

In 2014, we will graduate our fifth class with ten students. A number of our students continue to contribute to the field of art and special education. Two of our alumni have been accepted to five doctoral programs. Others have presented at Pennsylvania Art Education Association conferences, 2012 and 2013, and at Intersections: Arts and Special Education Conference at the Kennedy Center, 2013. Three alumni will present with Horoschak at the Council for Exceptional Children national convention, 2014.

Kim Gavin and Veronica Hicks, two Moore alumni, describe their research theses below. Gavin describes how language, literacy skills, and visual literacy in English Language Learners and students with disabilities can be enhanced in the art room. Hicks' research shows how art education can raise the self-confidence of young women artists who have disabilities.

## **Language, Literacy Skills and Visual Literacy: A Study of the Acquisition of Language and Literacy Skills by Special Education Students and English Language Learners (ELL) Gained in the Art Room Education Classroom**

As the United States' population rapidly shifts and demographics in urban public classrooms change, teachers are asked to teach students new to the English language (Shin & Kaminski, 2010). Yet many of these students need to learn to speak, read, and write English proficiently. Teachers are also asked to support and scaffold their lessons to accommodate different learning styles and developmental levels of their special education students with individualized education plans (IEP) (Batt, 2008). Both special education and English Language Learners (ELL) students are minority students in a classroom, but their numbers are growing. (Xu & Connelly, 2011). A data report from the Census Bureau for 2010, stated 'Of the 53.9 million school aged children aged 5 to 17 about 2.8 million or 5.2 % were reported to have a disability in 2010' (Brault, 2011). According to the 2008 Census, 10.9 million school-aged students (5-17) spoke a language other than English at home. Although each of these groups of students requires different classroom supports, they often do not get the extra support they need. Faced with the multiple challenges of teaching all students, general education teachers struggle to reach every student.

Some educational programs use a "deficit model" to teach English language learners (ELLs), in which the ELLs must catch up to the other students or they are viewed as being "in need of" or lacking skills (Xu & Connelly, 2011). However, both ELL and special education students bring skills to their general education classroom. They bring their personal experiences, cultural traditions, and prior knowledge. In fact, students' personal experiences and skills are both *encouraged* and *utilized* in the art education classroom. These same personal experiences and skills are often ignored or dismissed in the general education classroom, especially in urban public schools serving students from low socio-economic settings (SES) (Batt, 2008). This raises the question: How can students' personal experiences and skills be used to enhance the academic performance of special education and ELL students in other content areas? One solution is to form partnerships among special education teachers,

teachers of ELL students and art teachers (Batt, 2008, Gerber, 2011). Art education can foster thinking, learning, and communication skills.

### **ELL and Special Education Differences and Similarities**

Research demonstrates that students take up to seven years to become fluent or proficient in a new language (Krashen, 1998). Culturally responsive teachers can develop relationships with students that are mutual and respectful, creating a safe environment, which can aid learning and language acquisition. Stephen Krashen (1998), a renowned researcher in language acquisition and second language learners, wrote:

The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production. (pp. 6-7)

The art room is a safe space where different cultures and ideas can be explored, expressed, and communicated in a variety of ways. Visual literacy skills acquired in the art room can help students in decoding words and learning second language skills. There is much research regarding the acquisition of language skills, yet researchers have overlooked the skills acquired in the art room (Spina, 2006).

While the needs of special education students can differ from those of ELL students, both groups benefit from teaching strategies used in the art education classroom. There are times when the needs of both groups can overlap or be similar. Alternatively, the strengths of one group can provide support for the other group; working together supports learning and builds confidence in both groups. Similar to ELL students, special education students' prior knowledge, personal experiences, and culture are not considered sources of strength or success in a general education class (Xu & Connelly, 2011). General education teachers dread having students with IEPs in their classroom, fearing that these students will greatly lower their standardized test scores (Batt, 2008). Teachers are required to scaffold or break down their lessons to fit the learning needs of their special education students (Batt, 2008). For

some schools, inclusion for students with IEPs means that students with learning disabilities are included in special classes such as art and gym, but have separate self-contained general education classrooms. Yet, the art and gym classes are places in which many special education students excel. Their learning challenges are not considered a hindrance to their success in such classes.

### **Classroom Strategies**

Certain strategies, for example, translator or peer buddies and working in small groups, used in the art education classroom aid both ELL and special education students in acquiring literacy skills. The art education classroom is often where students work in small groups or in pairs. For example, the teacher can pair one ELL student with a translator buddy, a student who speaks both languages. Similarly, the teacher can pair a student with a speech and language disability with a typically developing peer. This strategy allows students to work together to learn at their own pace. The working pairs are able to build their understanding of the project and to help each other solve problems as they arise. Xu and Connelly (2011) suggested:

Dewey saw intelligence as a social phenomenon in which knowing was socially constructed. For Dewey, the *curious and creative minds* are minds working interactively with other minds to make meaning of social life, in effect, to *intellectualize practice*. Inquiry requires minds that are social conditioned to challenge, inquire, solve problems, improve matters, in short to change and reconstruct society. (p. 254)

The art education room provides a collaborative opportunity for students to “challenge, inquire, solve problems, and improve matters” (Xu & Connelly, 2011). Research has shown the importance of incorporating prior knowledge with new learning, which may involve connecting new learning to the students’ first or second language in the case of ELL students (Coelho, 2003; Corson, 1999; Cummins, 1994, 2000, 2007).

My original research question was: *How can acquisition of language and literacy skills acquired through visual literacy in the art education classroom improve the performance of special education and ELL students in general education classrooms?* An action research project was planned to gather data on this question. During the action research, I was the art

teacher. I collaborated with the fifth grade general education and special education teachers in an elementary school to link the language arts units of themed stories or literacy blocks to art projects, which were to be created in the art room during the same six weeks. A mixed group of five students; one ELL student with an IEP and four special education students came together to work on art projects based on the literacy unit. In this art education classroom research, each student contributed his or her prior knowledge and personal experiences to the interpretation of the project to be completed. The students then collaborated to solve design problems based on themes and topics covered in the students' fifth grade classroom.

I provided visual examples of completed projects or art history examples to give students a visual understanding of the art or literacy unit block concept. Providing visual examples allowed students who are visually motivated to become engaged and to gain an entry point to understand the concept being taught. This strategy also allowed students who are challenged by language barriers to overcome them by looking at the examples. The art examples also provided a visual link to the literacy block skills in the general education class. For example, the fifth grade students were studying wind power in their literacy unit. In the art education classroom we looked at Hart Benton's art, *The Hailstorm*. We compared information from the students' literacy unit and described how it related to the artwork. Then we created a piece of artwork that focused on strong, powerful wind, such as tornadoes.

### **Alternative Assessments**

Once a unit was completed, the art and special education teachers worked together to use alternative forms of assessment to gauge students' comprehension of the unit. Often general education teachers rely on reading/writing style tests as the only form of student assessment. If students are challenged by testing formats or have anxiety about reading or writing, they are often unsuccessful. Students with fine motor skill problems or with poor writing skills often emotionally shut down or disconnect from the project at the prospect of taking a test or completing a worksheet. These tests do not capture a student's full comprehension of a subject or skill.

In the art education classroom, alternative forms of assessment are used to gauge a student's progress with a concept or subject. For example, teachers assess a student verbally retelling a story, or allow students to illustrate their answers to verbal questions, using word games with word banks, or gather their artwork into a portfolio to show progress on a topic. These strategies showed a broader range of student understanding without the anxiety of taking a test or struggling with a new language.

The data was gathered through observation and verbal assessments. The special education teacher and I administered these alternative assessments to the students. All assessments were conducted in the art room. This data showed that students were gaining verbal literacy skills, using vocabulary from the language arts unit, and understanding and retelling stories in the same language arts unit. Alternative ways to access learning and comprehension were still required. Students' slight gains in writing and reading showed their struggle with writing, even when given simple prompts and word guides.

Within their artwork, words and ideas appeared without prompts or suggestions. Students could verbally retell a story, convey an idea, or show understanding of directions. Yet they continued to struggle with reading and writing words. During the ongoing interviews, students expressed an appreciation of art and the fun they had during class time. However, they showed concern when they were asked if literacy should be a part of art. Grimaces showed on their faces when literacy was mentioned. When it was explained that they would still be making art but that reading, art, writing, and vocabulary would be part of the projects, they agreed it would be a good idea — as long as they did not have to write about it. They did not realize the word puzzles and games they completed, or the words they wrote in their artwork were also writing. The word puzzles were writing exercises without the stress and did not cause an emotional shutdown in the students. There was a very different result when blank writing worksheets were presented, even when word banks were provided. These worksheets caused student stress and led to off-task behaviors.

Teachers used alternative assessment strategies for the special education and ELL students to measure their comprehension of subject matter. While accommodations were made for these students so that they would be able to achieve success, high standards were still

maintained for their work. Finally, according to observations made by the classroom and special education teachers, students showed changes in their behavior and increased self-confidence among their peers. They even began to take on leadership roles such as Boy Scout assistant or school visitor escort in the school community.

## **Findings**

This research showed that, through alternative ways of assessing - using the students' own learning styles and kinesthetic learning, the students made some gains in the areas of literacy and language. The students used vocabulary words and demonstrated them — "design," "connect," "apply concepts," and "create"- which are words that encompass the fourth level of Webb's Depth of Knowledge chart — extended thinking (Webb, 2005). They showed in the art making and writing process their ability to connect the literacy block units and the art projects that used these concepts. The most surprising area of improvement occurred in areas of behavior. The students' behaviors changed. They matured and showed initiative in settings outside of the art classroom.

The research demonstrated that special education and ELL students' kinesthetic understanding and skills, which are encouraged and supported in the art education classroom, can be used to enhance the language acquisition and literacy skills of these students. By fostering successes in the art room, that confidence can be transferred with positive results into other educational settings. This study has shown promising results and suggests that more research is needed in the area of art education, literacy, and language building.

## **Young Women Artists with Special Needs: Raising Self-Confidence Through Art**

Having a poor self-concept can lower one's capabilities and inhibit the ability to achieve. A student's self-concept can suffer when educational and social goals appear unattainable (Lackaye, Margalit, Ziv, & Ziman, 2006). Even the young learner with disabilities who is taught in the least restrictive environment may become agitated, infuriated, or feel isolated.

In contrast, providing the child with opportunities for mastery experiences in the art classroom gives both meaningful connections and encourages growth of the student's self-efficacy. Ancis and Phillips defined *argentic self-efficacy* as an individual's beliefs about her

ability to successfully engage in educational and career facilitative behaviors (1996). It plays a key role in whether or not individuals would attempt to engage in career relevant behavior (Ancis & Phillips, 1996). Building on this belief, self-efficacy judgment is derived from four principal sources of information: 1) personal performance accomplishments, or mastery experiences; 2) vicarious learning; 3) verbal persuasion; and 4) emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977, 1986). These sources were employed to develop a strong foundation of self-efficacy in this action research study to raise female art student's levels of self-confidence.

Fewer female students are identified as having a disability as male students, however their needs for supports to be successful are great. Female students have been known to have lower levels of self-efficacy compared to male students, and the additional stress of having a disability could make educational or professional aspirations seem beyond their reach (Rayle, Arredondo, & Robinson Kurpius, 2005; Reisberg, 2000). Self-efficacy development, through art-making experiences for female students with disabilities, allows the arts to be a key to healthy levels of self-confidence.

### **Goals of the Study**

This action research study took place in a foster care organization located in the central part of New Jersey. The organization incorporates a diversity of afterschool activities for foster children who receive school-based services. After meeting with children spanning a variety of ages, I chose to focus on a group of 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds who attended the same inner city middle school. I created an afterschool art club that we named Art4Girls, or Art4G. The Art4G club members included female students with special needs who possessed a high level of interest in art. We met after school every Friday and several Wednesdays for three months during the data collection time period of the study.

These young women, recipients of free foster care services, had a range of abilities and confidence levels. They were the participants in this action research about raising the self-confidence levels of young women artists with special needs through art-making. The research question that shaped the study was: *How can developing art-making skills promote self-efficacy in female students with special needs?*



This particular group of 12 participants represented three separate populations known to have high levels of self-doubt. The first population identified with low self-efficacy levels was school-aged children. As outlined by Bandura (1977), beliefs of confidence and doubt develop in childhood as children experienced varying tasks and situations. Focusing on adolescents could potentially yield favorable results toward raising self-efficacy because they have previously had art-making tasks in a school setting.

A second population identified with high levels of self-doubt was students who have been labeled with special needs or disabilities. Learning Disabled (LD) and non-LD peers who were equally matched in academics reported that students with LD had lower levels of hope (Lackaye et al., 2006). This report of efficacy relating to students with disabilities was a central concern before choosing this study. My goal was to make an impact on this statistic in the future.

The third identified population was female students. A literature review confirmed that male students had levels of self-efficacy that exceeded the levels of self-efficacy reported by female students at the same academic level. Women have reported lower educational self-efficacy, experience higher academic stress, and often perceive less support for education (Rayle et al., 2005). Furthering the research of building self-efficacy in young women by supplying them with activities that support positive beliefs may better prepare them with a defense for gender biased situations.

### **Curriculum Plan**

Students representing these three populations arrived at Art4G, excited to improve their art skills. The goal of the club was to elevate their levels of self-efficacy through constructive art experiences. Reflecting on their abilities, students were asked to think about what they could accomplish and focus on: "What can I," instead of focusing on self-worth, "What am I" (Lackaye et al., 2006).

The curriculum designed for Art4G included one unit plan with two lessons that focused on art-making skills that interested these middle school girls. The first group meeting consisted of the participants filling out a survey about the art-making skills they were interested in

improving. This survey also featured questions about the students' levels of self-confidence and levels of self-doubt. For example, one question asked the participants to recall moments inside and outside of school in which they felt confident or doubtful in their abilities.

After reading the students' surveys, the initial unit plan was altered to reflect the girls' interests and presented to the Art4G club members. The girls agreed they liked the content and wanted to participate in the lessons. Our discussion also gave the club members the authority to reject or accept the revised unit plan proposal. This process created group camaraderie among members through their decision-making. Allowing the students a choice of content demonstrated a respect towards student ideas. The art room became a space where the participants believed their voices would be heard.

The first lesson in the unit plan was the "Apple Time" lesson. It focused on realistic drawing skills, the incorporation of shading techniques, and drawing from observation. This lesson involved setting an apple in front of the student. The student observed the apple and then drew it. Once an initial drawing was made, the student was encouraged to bite the apple and then draw it a second time. A third drawing would focus on what was left of the apple after the student finished eating it - the apple core.

The second lesson was called the "Hair Self-Portrait" lesson. It focused on realistic facial features, the incorporation of fantasy and pattern design, and drawing/painting techniques. This lesson was introduced by reading the book, *I Love My Hair!* by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley (1998), illustrated by E. B. Lewis. It tells the story of a young black girl who is frustrated by her hair. As she sits in between her mother's legs, it is explained to her that her hair is capable of being worn in many styles and is a part of her African-American heritage. The young girl learns that her hair is a blessing, and in turn, she comes to love her hair. Students shared their own hair stories, identified facial features that they wanted to include in their own large scale self-portraits, and created patterns to include in the overlapping lines in their hair drawings.

Each lesson featured examples of famous artworks made by female artists and by student artists in their age range. The examples used in the unit plan reflected people from different cultural heritages, along with equally diverse abilities. The participants were

deliberately exposed to these examples with the intention that they would see a part of themselves in the art, validating themselves and their beliefs of achieving great results in their art by practicing their techniques in a supportive educational environment.

### **Raising Self-Efficacy**

The four sources to raise self-efficacy were involved in the Art4G teaching methods: (1) personal performance accomplishments; (2) vicarious learning; (3) verbal persuasion; and (4) emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977, 1986). These were incorporated into every class session.

*Personal performance accomplishments*, also known as mastery experiences, can be in the form of small achievements (e.g., drawing an oval for a face shape needing hand-over-hand assistance) and in the completion of modest goals (e.g., drawing an oval for a face shape without assistance). The final project would be completed through art making techniques that the participants initially did not possess. Students practiced and gained the skills needed to complete the project in ascending stages that built upon each other. This allowed each student to focus on the one skill needed to complete a project and practice it until mastering the technique.

*Vicarious learning* experiences, the process of learning from observing another person's behavior, were included in the class sessions. Art teachers can demonstrate a skill before asking a student to attempt the technique, implying that *if I can do this, so can you!* The intention for vicarious learning in this study was for the student to internalize the art teacher's attempt at implementing a skill as a success that they can do themselves. Moreover, if a fellow student demonstrates a skill, this may trigger a stronger internalization for student observers. Asking a student to demonstrate the skill in front of his or her peers can raise the student's level of anxiety to perform well, but the benefits of completing that task successfully greatly outweigh the chance of failure.

Next, *verbal persuasion* was used during the class sessions. Verbal persuasion is when an individual is motivated by others to complete a task. This includes encouragement, saying out loud to the participant "I know you can do this. Keep up the good work. You are doing a great job on your project."

Lastly, the fourth source of raising self-efficacy that was used during the art sessions was *emotional arousal*. Controlling the environment to intentionally impact emotional arousal can minimize stressors by creating a comfortable location in which to work. A high priority in this study is keeping the classroom environment relaxing, so students are physically and mentally comfortable. Developing the classroom into a place where the students would feel at ease after a long week of being in middle school took effort but was worth it. Students knew, after entering the art room, they would be respected and listened to, and never teased for their ideas or questions.

### **Classroom Adaptations**

Adaptations for students with special needs were woven seamlessly into the afterschool classroom experience and did not bring attention to varying ability levels. Often a typically developing student would enter the art club classroom and not notice that these adaptations were in place. For example, directions were written on the dry erase or interactive white board in clearly legible font and were located at the front of the classroom. Often black letters were printed on a white background, while on another screen white letters would be displayed on a black background. Those who preferred to view that screen found the directions easier to read with that color arrangement. A second set of directions were taped to the students' desks for immediate reference. This allowed students to follow along as the art teacher read the directions out loud and so students could read them later at their own pace. This technique was very helpful for students who had visual difficulties. They could get as close to the directions on their desk as they needed to for reading. Students with attention difficulties also found them convenient. They could check the task they needed to complete without having to raise their hand or ask the teacher for assistance. Students who were shy also found the directions taped to their desks helpful. They did not have to single themselves out by walking to the front of the classroom and asking for directions. Participants with hearing disabilities were seated closer to the teacher for a better hearing range or to lip-read.

The pathways in the Art4G classroom were made wider during afterschool hours, and sinks could be operated from a seated position for students with mobility devices. Materials for

projects were stored on low shelves in containers that were uniquely shaped for identification by touch and sight. Students with low vision were able to use these secondary ways of identification without attention being called to their disability.

One other key technique incorporated during all class sessions was to include small, calculated risk-taking opportunities. Small but meaningful risk-taking activities were arranged for the participants to experience with the expectation that they would gain higher self-efficacy levels because of their successful participation. Risk-taking activities included having a student demonstrate a skill that had some chance of failure in front of their peers. They also included setting the objectives to the final projects just outside students' comfort zones and initial skill sets. Involving the students in these risky tasks provided them with a greater appreciation for rising to the challenge when unsure of their abilities. Using the strategy of appropriate risk-taking activities relating to art making skills improved the student's self-confidence during this study.

### **Data Collection and Findings**

Four different types of data were collected to understand trends happening in the art classroom with this group of participants labeled with disabilities. Teacher participant observation forms were created for this study to be completed during class time, once a month for three months. All participants were studied for a minimum of two observation periods during the course of the study to note and compare changes in their behavior. Teacher observations indicated that all four sources of raising self-efficacy were incorporated during each observed class session. All observed class sessions involved appropriate risk-taking moments such as student demonstrations or trying out a new art skill. Every class session integrated the classroom adaptations for students with special needs without negative attention or embarrassment.

Written surveys were handed out in the beginning of a class session and filled out by participants. The written surveys allowed students to express thoughts privately to the art teacher. These surveys were completed once a month for three months with a final survey during the last session of the third month. The students' initial written surveys showed that they

possessed a strong desire to improve their art skills. The initial survey revealed their elevated concerns about failing at a task in front of their peers, both inside and outside of the school setting (e.g., "I suck at drawing anything but little cartoons." "I just plain freak out.").

The student surveys helped assess their levels of self-confidence throughout the study. The surveys collected at the culmination of the study showed that 75% of students' levels of self-confidence rose from moderate to high levels, and that 25% of students maintained high levels of self-confidence during the study. Thus, all of the students in the study maintained or increased self-confidence levels.

Teachers conducted focus group interviews with the students during the three-month study, taking place twice a month. Interviews were documented with audio and video recordings and transcribed. Student participants shared their strategies of handling stressful situations with each other. The students initiated generating a list of strategies to handle high-stress situations. Their list included the following: focusing on a person who makes them feel at ease; redirecting their attention by doing or thinking of other things; and remembering their best qualities. Focus group interviews revealed that student participants were mainly concerned about performing tasks without failing, especially in front of large groups of peers.

The students created artifacts during the art club sessions (see Figure 1), which included gesture drawings, practice still life sketches, shading and facial feature exercises, and final Apple Time and Hair Self-Portrait projects. Students were given a sketchbook and instructional worksheets for practicing art techniques during Art4G class time and for home use. Their artifacts were photographed during various stages of completion.

The collection of students' artifacts showed a development of improved art skills as seen by the growth in participant Lauren's portrait progression. Lauren was labeled with cognitive disability and experienced mobility issues, but that did not keep her from drawing her initial self-portrait. After several sessions of sketching human facial features she started to reference the techniques used in class to align the features on an oval for a head, and soon after added a neck and shoulders to her drawing. With more drawing practice, she moved on to drawing on large 18x24 inch paper to start her final project. Carefully noting her reflection in

a mirror, Lauren added her features to the portrait, along with a crayon resist before applying watercolor paint to her hair.

After three months, the students' artwork was submitted for display at a local gallery. The students received public recognition for their efforts by having their own art exhibit, complete with a gallery opening with food, family, and friends. The students were asked to stand in front of their artwork and to reflect on seeing their art projects on display in this formal venue. Some of the student responses included the following:

"It means that I was that good to have it displayed for a lot of people to see. I must have some talent if my art is going to gallery."

"It means a lot to me because I really love drawing and painting and when people say nice stuff and complement it makes me happy and excited which, inspires me to draw more."

Participants completed the final written survey at the art show. The students rated their self-confidence levels before joining Art4G and their levels of self-confidence after completing the action research project. Every student participant rated his or her level of self-confidence at five out of five points, the highest score on the scale. All student participants indicated that they maintained or gained self-confidence by being a participant in this action research project.

## **Conclusion**

Strategies from this action research study provide chances to build a healthy self-confidence level for students. Including the four sources of raising self-efficacy (providing personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and emotional arousal) can be executed at any stage during the class period. Small calculated risk-taking opportunities for students may cause some uncertainty at first, but with the successful completion of these opportunities the students' self-efficacy level will surely skyrocket. Lastly, incorporating adaptations and making a classroom as accessible as possible for students with disabilities not only helps them complete class routines, but may help typically developing students as well.

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**Figure 1**

Examples of Art4G Participant Lauren's Self-Portrait Progression



Examples of Art4G Participant Lauren's Self-Portrait Progression

# IDEA ↔ Empowerment Through Difference ↔ Find Card Strategies Communitarian Approaches to Empowerment

KAREN KEIFER-BOYD AND L. MICHELLE KRAFT

In educating *all* students toward full participation in a democratic society, the concept of *empowerment through difference* sits at the core of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), as it does with all examples of civil rights legislation. Consequently, an art education that fosters democratic values should empower students to

act on their visual environments in ways that reflect their beliefs and values . . .

[by examining] critically the larger systems that encompass their lives—belief systems, patterns of thought, representations of self—that are directly related to the pervasive influx of visual imagery that tells them what to believe, how to think, how to be. (Keifer-Boyd & Maitland-Gholson, 2007, p. 17)

Such empowerment and critical reflection, then, occurs through interaction and dialogue with others within the community, especially with those who are different from oneself. In this way, the inclusive art class community becomes more dynamic, more democratic, and its participants are more mutually invested as they are able to value the diversity of *all* of its members, regardless of (dis)ability. Art educator Kerry Freedman (2003) noted that the *communal* aspect of education is among its most important principles; and this principle, and its promise of mutual empowerment, becomes the driving force behind inclusive art education. Moreover, “the definition of disability under disability discrimination law accounts for the relational components of individuals’ lives, a matter of central importance to both feminist theory and to communitarian theory,” and we argue of central importance to an education of empowerment that is inclusive of difference (Ball, 2005, p. 108).

In this paper, we consider access to education in the visual arts, along with participatory student engagement in the inclusive art class, as ways of creating an empowered citizenry. We begin by examining the communitarian paradigm as reflected in the IDEA; we then contextualize those findings to the site of the inclusive art class, and a practice of

*empowerment through difference*. This practice involves sustained interaction with each other, which is promoted through communicative art expression in which each learns to identify strengths and capacities in others.

We discuss, with examples from our teaching, how the process of creating and using *Find Cards* can empower by difference. Understanding that *communitarian inclusion* encompasses more than one's physical placement within a setting, we share the *Find Card* strategy as a model of differentiated, integrated curriculum and assessment. We share our experiences in using *Find Cards*, which are adaptable to, and thereby provide for full participation of, learners experiencing a wide range of (dis)abilities (including "moderate to severe," and "gifted-and-talented"). This approach provides for stakeholder agency and interdependence that promotes collaboration, autonomy, and respect for difference.

### **Participatory Community: The Communitarian Perspective**

*Communitarian* theory provides the context for a fully participatory, inclusive art classroom. Rather than viewing some community members as *independent* and others *dependent*, this perspective argues that all are *interdependent*; and all stakeholders have contributions to make to the community, despite our (dis)abilities (Ball, 2005; Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013; Turnbull, 1991). "Communitarian theory, like feminist theory, emphasizes the importance of participation, dialogue, and communication" (Ball, 2005, p. 125). A communitarian approach to inclusion in the art classroom respects and finds value in all humanity; it emphasizes the duty of all participants to maximize strengths and build proficiencies in one another for the benefit of the group.

Rutherford Turnbull (1991) contrasted the communitarian paradigm with the notion of *individualistic utilitarianism*. He pointed out that the latter focuses on the individual self rather than one's responsibility toward others and presents specific problems for those experiencing disabilities. Under the communitarian perspective, however, equality is not an absolute, nor is it compensation to make up for one's perceived shortcomings resultant from a disability (Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013). Rather, one's access is relative to individual need with the recognition that inclusion of all benefits the community as a whole, and this can only truly occur through full

participation. “The statutory definition of disability under the ADA [Americans with Disability Act] does not assess the functional limitations of individuals by analytically separating them from others; instead, it focuses on relationships among individuals and between individuals and their environments (Ball, 2005, p. 134). Thus, we see a communitarian paradigm, toward the empowerment of all, reflected in the IDEA (2004) and in its accompanying federal regulations (IDEA Regulations, 34 C.F.R., 2006).

### **IDEA as Communitarian**

The IDEA (2004) delineates its expectation of participation of all citizens, including those experiencing disabilities, as a goal of education, declaring:

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. (20 U.S.C. § 1400)

Likewise, the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) clause within the IDEA mandate holds the presumption that students experiencing disabilities will be educated alongside their “non-disabled” peers to the maximum extent appropriate. They will only be taught outside of the general classroom environment when their educational requirements cannot be addressed there (U.S.C. 20 § 1412 (a)(5)(A)).

We believe that rather than merely aspiring to *accommodate difference* we should recognize that we are *empowered by difference*. In the art class as a communitarian LRE, continual interaction among participants is encouraged through communicative art expression so that each recognizes strengths of the others. These different capacities, once identified, can be skillfully supported so that they may contribute to the goals of the class-as-community. We advocate this communitarian paradigm, therefore, in that it views all students as *capable and worthwhile contributors* to the class environment (Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013). The community benefits from the valued differences among its members.

## Empowerment Through Difference

At the heart of a communitarian worldview is the concept *empowerment through difference*, which is to be enabled to make choices regarding work and learning, to take responsibility for those choices, and to actively participate with a community of learners in an educative process in a safe and enriching environment. Empowerment through difference is to counteract “exclusion, marginalization, and circumscribed opportunities” (Patterson, 2010, p. 150). The implementation of empowerment through difference is evident in a communitarian educational process when each individual has the opportunity to contribute, with the understanding that, in an interdependent community, *everyone* has contributions to make. This inclusive, communitarian perspective of empowerment through difference corresponds with the purposes and intent of the IDEA Federal Regulations.

Communitarian approaches to difference empower groups to change, challenge, or disrupt barriers that deny equity for all to thrive and achieve in a world free from oppression.

Classroom practices that work to empower-through-difference are thereby able to challenge normative constraints that create oppression; consequently, educators who engage in these practices create allied partnerships and build community toward social justice for all (Erevelles & Kafer, 2010; see also Wexler, 2009).

Difference is a collective act to dismantle constructions of cultural norms. New media theorist N. Katherine Hayles (1999) referred to inscriptions as the societal scripts of normalcy, which seem insurmountable obstacles to lived experiences. “The body is never a single physical thing so much as a series of attitudes toward it” (Davis, 2002, p. 22). The *Moving Mountains* film (Keifer-Boyd, Knight, Knochel, Liao, Meier, Patton, Shin, & Sweeny, 2013) along with films such as *Profoundly Normal* (Alley, Goldberger, & Robinson, 2003) can set the stage for collaborative projects to create art that questions assumptions of normalcy. The film *Profoundly Normal* (2003) is about the desire to be deeply normal and fear of being abnormal. What would the world be like if there was no normal, no dichotomous state of being, but instead difference is celebrated? Our bodies are as circumscribed and weighted down as much with the discursive as with the material physicality like the seemingly solid state of a rock-hard mountain. Exclusion, prejudice, marginalization, discrimination, and oppression

would no longer have a foothold within the seemingly insurmountable mountain of inscriptions of cultural norms.

Science philosopher Karen Barad (2003, 2007) developed the concept of *diffraction* as a methodological lens that looks for bends and curves around obstacles of cultural notions of normal as sites of agency. These agential bends involve joining with others, not as streams feeding and deepening cultural norms but performatively “moving away from the familiar habits and seductions of representation (reflecting on the world from outside) to a way of understanding the world from within and as part of it” (Barad, 2007, p. 88). A communitarian perspective empowered through difference is inclusive because notions of cultural norms are questioned and difference is a way of belonging to and understanding the world.

### **Differentiated Assessment Toward the Education of All**

The quality of reciprocity separates *training* from *education*. Training is a *one-way street* wherein the teacher, in a *banking model*, deposits information into the minds of the learners (Draves, 2000; Freire, 1990). *Transformative education*, on the other hand, empowers through difference. It requires contribution from and interaction between all learners and the teacher; all share with and learn from one another, that is, a form of leadership that is distributed among all participants.

The inclusive communitarian art classroom, then, empowers through difference using curriculum, instruction, and assessment that reflects transformative education. Feminist pedagogical principles align with communitarian theory, and provide strategies for transformative education within the context of the inclusive art classroom. Renowned feminist artist, scholar, and educator, Judy Chicago (2012) described: “Feminist art education begins with each person’s individual voice and builds both individual and collaborative art-making out of those issues expressed by many different voices” (p. 115). Moreover, “what disability discrimination law demands is something much closer to the understanding of equality held by feminist theory, one sensitive and attuned to issues of difference” (Ball, 2005, p. 142). The problem, however, is that schools have historically focused on analyzing student outcomes through *quantifiable measures*, especially through emphasis on standardized testing. This

standardized model of educational efficiency (which originated in the Industrial Revolution and is based in human capital theories of economics) requires that “all students [regardless of (dis)ability] are expected to master the same objectives, in a similar time frame, under ostensibly uniform conditions, regardless of individual interests or capacity, learning needs, personal circumstances or choice” (Wilson & Wright, 1994, p. 227; see also Kraft, 2006; and Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013). Assessment should allow for multi-modal ways of communicating knowledge to better allow for inclusion in the art class. For example, a student-learning objective that states, “The student will discuss the process for selection of work to include in a portfolio,” does not allow for students whose primary mode of communication is not through verbalization. Simply changing the wording from *discuss* to *share*, however, would be a more appropriate assessment for all learners.

The post-Industrial Revolution models of educational efficiency and assessment are in opposition to the communitarian perspective and, we believe, the philosophical underpinnings of the IDEA. This cost-benefit approach to educational efficiency is mitigated somewhat by the individualized educational requirements of special education law. Nevertheless, we still see echoes of this system of educational efficiency within No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001)—to which the IDEA is tied—as well as through states’ individual standardized testing practices, which include students experiencing disabilities without necessarily accommodating their needs.

The communitarian approach to educational efficiency, or *productivity*, is based in empowerment through difference by way of one’s ability to *contribute* to the community; and it also recognizes that community stakeholders may offer contributions that transcend economics (Keifer-Boyd & Kraft, 2003; Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013; Turnbull, 1991). *Find-Cards*, as a differentiated assessment strategy, provides for opportunities to evaluate student understanding of art and art making in a way that is empowering, individualized, communal, and that encourages agency through one’s ability to contribute.

### **Find Cards as Differentiated Assessment**

*Find Cards* is a differential assessment strategy that Keifer-Boyd developed in the 1970s for teaching mixed age groups from five year olds to elders in a museum setting. The cards ask



the cardholder to work with at least one other person to find what is described on the card. A *Find Card* begins with a directive or clue of something to *find* in an exhibition and includes a question. For example:

*Find an artwork that presents a way of knowing the world that differs from what you are familiar. What is the worldview and how is it conveyed?*

*Find an artwork that conveys ideas important to you.  
What are the ideas and how are they communicated?*

*Find a work of art that is based on a narrative. What is the narrative?*

Find Cards can be developed and modified according to curricular goals and learning differences. Nicole Taylor and John Chacksfield (2005), information communication technology educators specializing in learners with disabilities, advocate that educators need to “create appropriately different learning experiences for mixed ability learners within a curriculum” (p. 14). A *Find Card* activity elicits a sense of student agency in selecting artworks, and yet focuses a student team’s search and discussion in an open-ended translation of curricular content from the combined strengths of the team. Teaching, learning, and assessment are integrated in *Find Card* strategies. *Find Cards* increase active engagement through relevancy to learning about what students find interesting. Moreover, *Find Cards* can be modified without diminishing learning goals.

When students create *Find Cards*, teachers discern what students find important. Also, in composing a question, reflection on what is learned integrates assessment with learning. Teachers can assess the *Find Cards* as evidence of what students understand from the art lessons. Students’ *Find Cards* are not confined to answers the teacher might expect, yet in the assessment of understandings as expressed in the student-created *Find Cards*, teachers can reteach for better understanding of art lesson goals. Below are examples of student-generated find cards:

1. Find an artwork that is abstract. What are the qualities of this work that make it abstract? Are these similar to qualities of the Abstract Expressionist paintings we have studied this semester?

2. Find an artwork that could stimulate the senses and impact the way people respond to an issue. How are viewers' emotions stimulated with this work?
3. Find an artwork that is directed to a specific audience. What audience does the work speak to, and what is it communicating?
4. Find an artwork that uses symbols that are not cliché and yet would be understood by many people. Who would understand these symbols? What is your interpretation of the symbols?

### **Find Cards and Virtual World Exhibition**

*Find Card* strategies are suitable for both physical and virtual sites. We use the potential of virtual worlds for connectivity but also resist, in our use of technology, a detachment from the physical world. We instead use the technology with its simulation and network capacities to engage in the world. With opportunities to exhibit art in virtual worlds, students can curate, invite guests from afar, and create *Find Cards* for their exhibitions. Pre-service teachers are learning to do this in our courses using *Virtual Immersive Educational World (VIEW)*, a virtual environment for educational use only, designed particularly for K-12 educators.<sup>1</sup>

There can be a real-time exhibition opening that is accessible for all, regardless of mobility or distance, through virtual worlds, either simultaneously or over time. Teams can select a *Find Card* and an artwork as the focus of investigation. With a program such as VoiceThread®, students can speak using the “comment” button and their voices are recorded. They can collaborate with a peer using voice-synthesizing computer-generated simulation of human speech, or they can type their comments. VoiceThread® offers multi-modal ways to explore an artwork, photograph, or other type of image uploaded for online access. The program's functionality provides ways to zoom into different parts of an image and to have an audio description accompanying the image. Additionally, Voice Thread®'s capability to make marks on an image is similar to a built-in pointer, or a way to emphasize and direct attention, particularly as the mark-making is recorded and corresponds to the audio.

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<sup>1</sup> An example from Keifer-Boyd's Spring 2013 course that is available to try with students is at [http://cyberhouse.arted.psu.edu/322/projects/3c\\_tdvt2013.html](http://cyberhouse.arted.psu.edu/322/projects/3c_tdvt2013.html). It is open to all ages with no exhibition closing date. Instructions to enter the virtual world as an avatar are linked on the website. There are also options to see, hear, or read about the artworks, and alternative ways to comment on the work.

The VoiceThread® tool for *Find Cards* provides multi-modal approaches to share and assess understandings. “Though VoiceThread® will not address the learning needs of every student in every situation, its interface and feature set are well-suited for promoting student engagement and motivation as well as for helping students develop as independent learners” (Brunvand & Byr, 2011, p. 30). When many respond to a prompt or find card question for a work of art, VoiceThread® generates small icons surrounding the artwork to differentiate each of those responses. Permissions can be set for groups or the public to hear as many responses as have been recorded. Thus, a communitarian perspective can be achieved when different views are expressed, recorded, revisited, reflected upon, and responded to in dialogue surrounding an artwork.

### **Building Community for Inclusive Art Education**

The adaptability of *Find Cards* allows for the facilitation of dialogue among arts education disciplines. For example, in our session at the VSA Intersections: Arts and Special Education Conference at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in August 2013, we asked participants to create *Find Cards*, in part, because we have found that experiential education provides insights that didactic education cannot. Additionally, the strategy quickly appraises what is important to a community of practice, and offers a resource of research directions and needs assessment, in this case identifying gaps between current conditions and desired intersections of art and special education.

We asked participants to reflect on the conference sessions they attended or even select from ones not attended but listed in the program, to create a *Find Card* that begins with the sentence, “Find a session that . . .” (fill in the blank here). We instructed participants to follow the directive to discover by posing an open-ended question about a session, one that would allow responders to share what they have learned, or what has impacted them. Below are examples of the *Find Cards* produced at the Intersections conference.<sup>2</sup>

1. Find a presentation that gave you a new perspective on how you view student(s) capacity for artistic growth? How will you use that new perspective?

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<sup>2</sup> For a full list of the Intersection Conference Find Cards responses see [http://cyberhouse.arted.psu.edu/inclusion/Intersection\\_Conference\\_Find\\_Cards](http://cyberhouse.arted.psu.edu/inclusion/Intersection_Conference_Find_Cards).

2. Find a session in which Universal Design for Learning was a topic of discussion. What new ways of presenting or providing information did you like or wish to try?
3. Find a session that deals with music education tools. How can you use these tools to enhance student learning? How would student learning be different if visual representations of notation were not available?
4. Find a session that used a story along with demonstrating a variety of teaching methods? How did this session show how to include all students? What strategies were used to help develop students' social and communication needs?
5. Find a session that does not rely upon "deficit language" when referring to students with disabilities. How does "deficit language" contribute to marginalization of students with disabilities? What other language might we use?
6. Find a session that describes the role and importance of having trained, knowledgeable, prepared paraeducators. What can you do to improve interactions between paraeducators and students; and between paraeducators and art educators?
7. Find a children's story that can be used to inspire inclusive practices with dance. How does that movement teach inclusivity?

The use of *Find Cards* as differentiated assessment is valuable in fostering the exchange of ideas with people different from oneself. The communitarian art class that aspires to include all learners depends upon the art teacher to foster a climate of respect in creating a safe place for all learners (Nordlund, Speirs, & Stewart, 2010). This is often achieved by facilitating dialogue through providing open-ended prompts and questions, such as those demonstrated in the use of *Find Cards* as an instructional strategy and model of assessment that is flexible in meeting the needs of all learners. By building a community of trust and respect, the art educator supports the democratic values through the empowerment of students by virtue of their differences as envisioned in the IDEA. With *Find Cards*, students are empowered to share their art with one another in a way that furthers full participation, self-advocacy, and self-determination as envisioned by federal law.

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## Tools and Stories: Preparing Music Educators for Successful Inclusive Classrooms Through Universal Design for Learning

RHONDA VIETH FUELBERTH AND LYNDA EWELL LAIRD

Effective inclusive learning takes place in classrooms where equity is commonplace, where students are treated as people and not as labels, where all students have access to high-quality, engaging, music/arts instruction, where all students feel valued, where all students' strengths are recognized, and where teachers, students, and peers are partners in creating and problem solving. Professor in Music and Human Learning at the University of Texas at Austin, Robert Duke asserted that we must have a "vision of students as accomplished learners." He further described these accomplished learners as "attentive, diligent, inquisitive, skillful, persistent, patient, thoughtful, meticulous, and discriminating" (slide 6, 2009). To establish learning environments where these conditions exist, and where accomplished learners thrive, curriculum must be thoughtfully developed, and artistically implemented. Universal Design for Learning is a meaningful framework for creating such conditions (Darrow, 2010).

The concept of universal design originated in the field of architecture. Rather than retrofitting architectural design to meet the needs of individuals with a variety of needs, building and facility design now endeavors to proactively ensure accessibility for all.

The focus of universal design is not on providing special segregated facilities (ramps, lifts, etc.) for physically disabled persons to enter and use the built environment, but rather seeking to provide an inclusive environment that considers the potential ability of all people through the creation of products and environments that everyone can use, regardless of age, physique and degree of disability (Seirlis, 2003).

When the same proactive approach is applied to education, and specifically arts and music education, educational experiences are designed in a way that proactively ensure accessibility (Pisha, & Coyne, 2001). This approach is fundamentally different than attempting only to adapt or modify instruction, or to accommodate a specific set of needs. Many strategies, adaptations, and accommodations, when implemented for the entire group, make music materials and objectives more accessible for *all* learners. Many of these adjustments are

considered master teacher techniques, and not only benefit students with exceptionalities, but also students who are not receiving special education services.

Universal Design for Learning is an educational approach with three primary principles (1) multiple means of representation, to give diverse learners options for acquiring information and knowledge; (2) multiple means of action and expression, to provide learners options for demonstrating what they know, and (3) multiple means of engagement, to tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation. This paper provides specific examples of strategies and ideas organized using the UDL guidelines developed by CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology). The guidelines provide an excellent roadmap for not only *designing* arts education experiences, but also for *analyzing* accessible arts curricula and lesson design (CAST, 2011; Glass, Meyer, & Rose, 2013). A summary of the principles and respective guidelines is shown in Figure 1.

### **Universal Design for Learning Principles**

Universal Design for Learning is based on brain research examining learner variability. In the text *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age*, Rose and Meyer (2002) defined three neural networks that work independently and together in learning tasks.

*Recognition networks* are specialized to sense and assign meaning to patterns we see; they enable us to identify and understand information, ideas, and concepts.

*Strategic networks* are specialized to generate and oversee mental and motor patterns. They enable us to plan, execute, and monitor actions and skills.

*Affective networks* are specialized to evaluate patterns and assign them emotional significance; they enable us to engage with tasks and learning and with the world around us (2002, p. 13).

Grounded in neuroscience research, Universal Design for Learning principles for curriculum coordinate with the three neural networks described by Rose and Meyer (2002). Principle 1 supports recognition learning by providing multiple, flexible methods of presentation, Principle 2 supports strategic learning by providing multiple, flexible methods of expression, and Principle 3 supports strategic learning by providing multiple, flexible options for engagement. The *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines Version 2.0* (CAST, 2011)



provides further detail regarding the implementation of the UDL framework, and also serves as a learner variability litmus test for curriculum design and lesson planning. Within each UDL guiding principle are a series of checkpoints. These guidelines and checkpoints serve as a framework for the teaching strategies presented in this paper.

### **Graduate and Undergraduate Learning in Music and Special Education**

To ensure appropriate preparation for teaching music in inclusive environments, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Glenn Korff School of Music offers both an undergraduate and graduate course in the field of music and special education. These courses are provided *within* the School of Music so that individuals receive this essential training in a discipline-specific environment. Students build a foundation of knowledge concerning federal and state legislation, IEP's, assessment, adaptation of curricular material, and current methodologies and research using course texts, readings, and digital media (Adamek & Darrow, 2010; Hammel & Hourigan, 2011). Students in both courses complete lesson and curriculum design assignments using the Universal Design for Learning model. While this paper centers on music teacher preparation programs, UDL is a model that works across disciplines, within and outside the arts, providing a universal structure for accessibility (Courey, Tappe, Siker, & LePage, 2012).

### **UDL Principles, Guidelines, and Strategies**

#### **Graduate Student Contributions**

Graduate students in the master's program in music education are required to take a 3 credit hour course titled *Inclusive Music Education*. Using principles from the online text, *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning* by David Rose and Anne Meyer (2002), and case studies, readings, and handouts from our course website, graduate students working as in-service teachers contribute to our Universal Design for Learning Strategy Bank. Several modules in the course precede the strategy bank assignment. In these modules students become familiar with literature and research in music education for children and adolescents with disabilities to include specifics about characteristics, disability identifications, and subsequent challenges common to learners in public school settings. These challenges may manifest themselves through differences in cognition, communication,

language and culture, behavioral or emotional challenges, sensory challenges, and/or physical or medical conditions. Targeting the learning needs of students with specific learning strengths and challenges, in-service teachers post multiple strategies for each of the UDL principles.

### **Undergraduate Student Contributions**

Undergraduate students learn how to serve the needs of all of their students, including students who receive special education services under the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act, formerly Public Law 94-142). For one requirement of the class, students complete a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) lesson plan and peer teaching assignment in which they adapt a current lesson plan into one that offers more variety in the ways they present concepts, ask students to express their skills or knowledge, or engage their students.

The following provides an explanation of each UDL principle and strategies based on UDL guidelines recommended by our graduate students in the UDL bank. Vignettes based on undergraduate student lesson plans serve to illustrate how the UDL principles work within the context of one lesson.

### **UDL Principle 1: Multiple Means of Representation**

To support recognition learning, provide multiple, flexible methods of presentation (CAST, 2011). Examples of strategies used to accomplish this goal include: (a) altering modes of presentation to include use of multimedia in instruction, (b) altering printed materials-print to speech and speech to print, (c) pre-teaching, (d) using digital materials, (e) creating student-centered learning environments and activities, (f) using varied repetition, and (g) designing activities that are multi-level and multi-sensory (see, for example, Goldman, 2003; Rao & Gagie, 2006; Reimer & Moyer, 2005; Stahl, & Aronica, 2002; Strangman, & Hall, 2003; Tabbers, Martens, & van Merriënboer, 2004; Vicente, Orrantia, & Verschaffel, 2007). For a summary of UDL Principle 1, Guidelines 1-3, and suggested strategies, please see Figure 2.

#### **Vignette 1**

#### **Hannah: Crackers and fruit snacks**

There is laughter and wonder as Hannah begins her lesson by passing around salted crackers and sugary fruit snacks. The students in the class are excited to find out what they will

do with these foods during this music lesson. She asks them to eat one cracker and describe its shape, the way it tastes, the texture, or anything else they notice while eating it. They do the same for the fruit snacks. They make a class list of descriptions on the white board (1:3.1; 3:7.2)\*. *Crunchy. Salty. Square. Dry ... Chewy. Fruity. Smooth. Juicy...* The students smile as they see the differences appear on the board and try to come up with even more specific descriptions (2:4.1). Hannah explains, “this part of my lesson was to show you that describing music can be just like describing food – and today we will listen to two musical examples that are just as different as the cracker and the fruit snack. But before you tell me *words* that describe the music, I’d like you to show me with your body. We’ll all move to the music in different ways.” (2:4.1; 3:7.1)

First, she plays the madrigal *Sing We and Chant It* by Thomas Morley. Some of the students giggle with surprise but begin moving in a light and flitting style. Others pretend to hold teacups and bow to one another in a regal style. Others sway from side to side to show the beat. Still others look around to borrow movement ideas from their peers. Next, Hannah plays *Sing, Sing, Sing*, by the New York Voices (a vocal jazz ensemble). The students immediately change their movements. The students use jazz hands, snap and sway, and even pretend to play a number of instruments from the big band that accompanies the piece.

Next she asks the student to describe with words either what they heard or the movement they created or saw a peer create. They make another contrasting list of descriptions on the board (1:1.1). *Light. Regal. Four voices. A cappella... Jazzy. Swinging. Trumpets. Loud.* Hannah says the students really like opportunities to move to music and learn in different ways. She also reflects that while she gives her students quite a bit of freedom to express themselves, they are all engaged and learning and much more creative than when she had previously taught this lesson without the food and movement components. She also really likes how she can assess her students in a variety of ways in this lesson – by their verbal descriptions or their movements or a combination of the two (2:4.1).

**UDL Principle 1, Guideline 1: Provide options for perception.** Graduate students recommended a number of strategies for UDL Principle 1, Guideline 1, providing options for perception. To customize the display of instructional materials graduate students

suggested adjusting print media by de-cluttering pages highlighting relevant information, and duplicating handouts and other print materials on a projector to allow for their guided use. To make musical materials more accessible for all students, vary elements such as pitch and tempo. Technology can be utilized to assist with this strategy. Applications like *Audiosnail* allow tempo to be manipulated without changes in pitch. Color-code both fonts and notation for ease of reading and better isolation of specific details of pitch and rhythm. This strategy is supported by the work of researchers who examined the impact of color coding musical notation (Kuo, & Chuang, 2013; Rogers, 1991).

To provide alternatives for audio and visual materials, use manipulatives to represent musical elements such as note values, phrase contour, and form. Videos, pictures, graphics, word webs, and digital posters can also be used to provide a visually rich learning environment. Technology tools such as *Glogster*® provide media rich alternatives to presenting information. Interactive white boards and document cameras can be used to present musical symbols, terms, and instrument families. Projected musical scores allow guided and layered listening opportunities. Engaging learners in kinesthetic activities through teacher-led movement further enhances learning as students actively engage their whole bodies in the process. A few examples of graduate student work further illustrate these strategies:

When learning a new concept or vocabulary term, instead of just reading it out loud or having the students copying the definition right out of the book, I use a Frayer model (Frayer, Frederick, and Klausmeier, 1969) or word web and post the word, symbol, etc., on our word wall in the front of the class room so students are always aware of our new vocabulary.

Utilize the graphic generator on iTunes® to give students an illustration of dynamic activity in the music.

Instead of always having the students try and figure out where exactly we are by saying out loud a measure number, which continues to be difficult for some students, I scan the music into my computer and then display it up on my SMART Board®. That way if I want to point out a specific term or symbol, I can just circle it on the board so that students can locate it much faster in their music.

**UDL Principle 1, Guideline 2: Provide options for language, expressions, and symbols.** To clarify vocabulary and symbols prevalent in musical materials, graduate students suggested using traditional bulletin boards to illustrate concepts. Rather than decorating the room with multiple bulletin boards, introduce bulletin boards slowly, teaching the concepts presented in each board before introducing new material. Project vocabulary or share it with the option of embedded links in technology-based materials. To decode text notation, and symbols, use a systematic approach to reading notation, with visual supports such as projected solfège syllables, reinforced through body movement such as hand signs to represent pitch. In the choral/vocal environment, adopt an *everyone sings all the time* approach to learning music, so that singers are not sitting idly while a one voice part (soprano, alto, tenor, or bass) rehearses. Students benefit from more repetition for improved sight-singing, and better understanding of the entire musical score. Use multiple media to pre-teach as well as reinforce musical learning. Provide access to recordings and online materials such as a YouTube® channel so that students experience music *before* it is encountered in the classroom, reinforcing learning parallel to classroom work.

Since learner variability is present in reading printed text, it is also a factor in reading musical notation, which is an abstract representation of an aural phenomenon. Many musicians and educators have developed ways of varying notation systems. Figure 5 illustrates one notation style used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to adjust notation elements of pitch and rhythm through manipulation of shape (Grayson, 2012). Today, a variety of technologies give educators many options for adjusting notation for a variety of learners. Online notation programs such as *Noteflight*® allow educators to enter notation and share music through an online environment. Notation can be color coded, and simplified. *Noteflight*® users can add or take away individual elements of the score to vary the complexity of the musical material displayed. Playback is adjustable in terms of isolating various parts, transposing music to key areas most accessible to individual students, and even slowing tempo without altering pitch.

**UDL Principle 1, Guideline 3: Provide options for comprehension.** To aid comprehension, graduate students stated the importance of activating background knowledge, assisting students in making connections with prior musical encounters, and making connections

to popular music. Highlight critical features by creating musical materials with fewer items on the page, or highlight individual voice or instrumental parts. Use task analyses to guide information processing and isolate and structure sequencing for learning musical concepts such as pitch and rhythm. Orff process, often used in elementary music instruction, contains a number of UDL friendly elements such as varied repetition, connecting speech to rhythmic understanding, and use of movement as a way to connect physically with music.

Provide models of final products to support memory and information transfer. Intentionally teach for transfer of skills and knowledge from one learning experience to the next. Consistent use of varied repetition enables learning activities that support one musical concept, thereby solidifying learning. Mnemonic devices help learners remember important information. One graduate student writes about a concept oriented approach, “For each concept that I teach, I provide a variety of activities that reinforce the objective. Usually there is a song, instrument piece, notation activity, movement activity and game that all practice that particular skill.”

## **UDL Principle 2: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression**

To support strategic learning, provide multiple, flexible methods of expression and apprenticeship (CAST, 2011). Graduate students’ examples of strategies reflecting this principle include: (a) varying options for methods of expression; (b) giving students options for demonstrating understanding of musical concepts to include singing, playing, moving, improvising, and composing; (d) using self- and peer-evaluation; (e) using continuous, formative assessment; and (f) implementing graphic organizers (see, for example, Meltzer, 2007; Mosco, 2005; Orsmond, Merry, & Reiling, 2002; Stoner, Beck, Bock, Hickey, Kosuwan, & Thompson, 2006; Strangman, Hall, & Meyer, 2003; Webre, 2005; Zimmerman, & Kitsantas, 2005). For a summary of UDL Principle 2, Guidelines 4-6, and suggested strategies, please see Figure 3.

### **Vignette 2**

#### **Meghan: Paper plates**

With no instruments and no budget for her lesson, Meghan needed to really think outside the box when she planned to have her students practice the skill of keeping the beat

(1:1.1). Then it occurred to her that paper plates are inexpensive and could be used in some really creative ways. As Meghan starts the music, each student receives a white paper plate and they began imitating their teacher by tapping their plate to the beat (1:3.3). She pauses the music after a few seconds. “Now, I’d like to see just how creative you can be with your plate and the beat today. As we go around the circle, you need to show your peers a new way of keeping the beat. It can be silent or make sound as long as it is on the beat” (3:7.1).

Student creativity blooms as students tap the plate, move it front and back, side-to-side, and even toss it in the air and catch it to the beat – all creating original and unexpected visual representations of the beat. Meghan notices that the visual and aural combination some of the students create are the most engaging and that students enjoy being able to create their own way to keep the beat (2:4.1). She also really likes that the students are leading one another – giving her the freedom to take an individual assessment of each student’s skill level.

**UDL Principle 2, Guideline 4: Provide options for physical action.** To vary methods of response and capacity to navigate the physical environment, graduate students advocated the use of portable or classroom whiteboards, giving students the ability to respond from where they are seated. Personal hand held white boards (low-tech) or tablet devices (high-tech) provide many options for student responses both musical and non-musical. Many students need time for metacognition, and additional processing. Classroom discussion and cooperative learning models such as Think, Pair, Share (Lyman 1981) provide options for student engagement. Cooperative learning and individual learning can be implemented in a variety of music classroom environments, while singing, playing, improvising, and composing.

Students should have a variety of options to demonstrate learning, through a number of formative and summative alternate assessment options. For example, students may choose to sing or play compositions rather than notating them. Informal, embedded assessment might include students moving their hands close together or far apart to demonstrate understanding of dynamic contrast, or using contrasting movements to demonstrate understanding of form. Formally, alternatives for written quizzes might include verbal quizzes. Playing tests might be completed using video recording equipment or in front of a smaller group rather than in front of the entire group.

Improvisation and composition activities present opportunities for flexible methods of expression. Capitalize on student strengths by providing options to improvise or compose with partners or in small groups (Bell, 2008). Technology provides a growing number of ways to demonstrate learning. Technology tools like *Garageband®*, *Noteflight®*, *Bloom®* and other composition tools allow learners to express themselves musically regardless of achievement level. A variety of computer games and apps enable students to learn independently or in small groups. Technology devices add an appealing gaming element to learning. Students can focus on a number of skills and concepts such as ear training, music literacy, improvisation, accompanying, and using a variety of rehearsal/performance tools. Examples of graduate student work further illustrate these strategies:

I often give my students options on how they want to present an assignment to me. For instance, playing tests can be done in person, recorded and turned in, played with a partner, etc., as long as they show me what they have learned.

I try to give multiple assessments for different concepts being learned. I have a worksheet type assessment, a “clicker” assessment, and a spoken assessment. If a student does particularly well in one style and not the others, I can use that knowledge to more accurately assess that student.

When completing the rhythm of the day exercise, students can respond by counting and clapping their hands, use rhythm sticks, stomping their feet, or moving any part of their body to demonstrate the rhythm.

When learning BAG on recorder, we learn the fingerings on wrists only, play a BAG game to reinforce fingerings, and then finally apply it to the instrument so that they have had tactile and mental practice before getting to make the sound.

**UDL Principle 2, Guideline 5: Provide for flexibility in expression and communication.** Emphasizing the importance of communication with all students, Guideline 5 addresses access to assistive technology. Graduate students advised teachers to give a variety of options for expression, many of which integrate technology. Offer a variety of media options for student expression, including *PowerPoint®*, *Keynote®*, and *Prezi®*. Low-



tech options might include expressing knowledge in drawings or cartoons. Notation and improvisation applications can be useful tools for composition and construction. Students may also expand on composition/improvisation skills by engaging in activities in which partial completion of composition elements is required. For example, the music teacher provides the first two measures of a melody and asks the student to finish the musical sentence. Provide support for practice and performance by integrating checklists for performance skills, and varying or strengthening practice routines. Use programs like *SmartMusic*® as incentives for goal achievement. *SmartMusic*® is an interactive music education program that allows students to play or sing along with musical examples shown on the computer screen. The program gives immediate feedback showing correct pitches and rhythms in green and errors in red. The program tracks and monitors student progress so they can see improvement over time.

**UDL Principle 2, Guideline 6: Provide options for executive functioning.** CAST guideline developers define executive function as the “capabilities that allow humans to overcome impulsive, short-term reactions to their environment and instead to set long-term goals, plan effective strategies for reaching those goals, monitor their progress, and modify strategies as needed” (CAST, 2011, p. 25). Graduate students posited that guided goal setting can strengthen performance. Student developed goals and objectives can be in the form of journaling, checklists, rubrics, and other graphic or pictorial representations, to aid them in tracking and monitoring progress. Plan for specific, frequent, and immediate feedback, to assist students in managing information and resources. One graduate student illustrated this:

I give students that succeed quickly the chance to compose for the class. While I work with the rest of the class, a student who may otherwise be bored repeating something they’ve mastered gets 4-8 rhythm cards and a chord structure. I allow them to choose from 3-4 pitches for each measure (within the chord structure) and they decide which order to put the rhythm cards in and then assign pitches to each note. Once they’re done, they can perform for the class and since I designated the chords and only gave them certain note options I am able to create an accompaniment for their composition.

### **UDL Principle 3: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement**

To support affective learning, provide multiple, flexible options for engagement (CAST, 2011). A sample of strategies to support this principle includes: (a) planning for meaningful and relevant artistic experiences, (b) offering choices of content and materials, (c) offering adjustable levels of challenge, and (d) offering choices of rewards and learning contexts (see, for example, Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Cameron, & Pierce, 2006; Immordino-Yang, & Damasio, 2007; Kamins, & Dweck, 1999; Ryan, & Deci, 2000; Shogren, Faggella-Luby, Bae, & Wehmeyer, 2004; Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, & Turner, 2004; Suarez, 2007). For a summary of UDL Principle 3, Guidelines 7-9, and suggested strategies, please see Figure 4.

#### **Vignette 3**

##### **Gary: Large scale floor staff**

As students enter the room they spot something large and somewhat familiar on the floor. The peer teacher for the day, Gary, has placed five long lines of tape on the tiles to create a musical staff (1:1.1). "Today in class we are going to learn about the musical staff and get some practice moving around on it with our bodies and our voices." He chooses one student to stand on a line and another to stand on a space between the lines to show where notes can be placed.

Next, Gary asks another student to start anywhere on the staff and then move either up or down the staff to show higher or lower pitches (2:4.1). He asks the rest of the class to vocalize along with the student who is moving, so that everyone sees and hears the pitch changing (1:2.3; 2:4.1). The whole class sings "loo" while the volunteer moves up and down first slowly, and then quickly as she realizes she has the command of the entire class. She even tries hopping from high, middle, and low on the staff to try to challenge her peers. Gary doesn't have any problem getting additional students to volunteer for this job. In fact, every student wants a chance to lead the class (3:7.1; 3:8.3). Gary reflects that this is a much more enjoyable and engaging way to introduce the concept of a staff that he normally would have done without singing or movement. He also observes that the students have a more authentic understanding of the function of the staff at the end of the lesson.

**UDL Principle 3, Guideline 7: Optimize and recruit student interest.** Student engagement and interest is related to individual choice and student autonomy. Graduate students suggested that students be given a variety of musical material choices. Give students opportunities to make musical decisions, such as interpretation of various musical elements in a score, or in the development of actions or dances that enhance performance. Musical experiences are more meaningful when social and cultural relevance is established. Enhance interest by providing musical materials that reflect the varied social and cultural backgrounds of students. To support autonomy, students can measure their musical development through baseline assessments, and subsequent measures of individual progress.

Focusing on student interests enhances relevance and authenticity in musical experience. Students who lead activities or warm-ups share in ownership of the learning environment. Optimized interests are achieved in learning environments that are safe and free from threats or distractions. Established routines and teacher support can minimize performance anxiety. Providing frequent opportunities for students to play solos or duets can lessen pressure in assessment or formal performance situations.

Two graduate students gave specific examples of strategies to enhance student interest by providing performance and assessment options:

During our recorder unit, we practice as a group the majority of the time. I also have them work in small groups on songs they want to practice. Then I give them opportunities to perform for the class, alone or with a friend, if they are interested. When grading playing assessments I use a baseline at the beginning of the year and grade primarily on improvement. This allows students to play things slower or make other adjustments that will allow them to be successful.

Two other graduate students illustrated the importance of capitalizing on specific student interests, and allowing students to create and share their own music:

Find examples that pertain directly to your students. If you have a student that is struggling to pay attention, but really enjoys cars, make the rhythms about cars for the day (i.e., Ford, Chevy, Mitsubishi, etc.) Allow students to also explore this to keep them more engaged.

Last semester we started having an ‘open mic’ every Friday they had class (we’re on the block [schedule] so it ended up being about every other Friday). The students were able to engage in concepts taught and learned through their own personal music creation and then had the opportunity to share with the class.

**UDL Principle 3, Guideline 8: Optimize sustained effort and persistence.**

Graduate student work illuminated the importance of both group and individual goals and objectives. To optimize challenge, which will enhance effort, encourage students to reach successive approximations toward a goal. Base progress on models, but encourage self-assessment with an emphasis on effort rather than achievement.

Provide multiple opportunities to participate in small groups to foster partnerships, collaboration, and community. Musical games such as music basketball or baseball provide high interest student directed opportunities for growth. One teacher shared an example of a gaming activity, “When teaching the pattern “do, re, mi,” I have students read flashcards, sing the patterns, and play a game where one student sings a pattern and the others have to find the matching notation.” Encourage students to continue participation in music making outside of the school environment, to further effort and persistence.

**UDL Principle 3, Guideline 9: Provide options for self-regulation.** Graduate students shared ideas about a variety of reward systems such as awards for achievement. One teacher uses sticker charts to track achievement while another strings teacher provides mini Karate belts that are colored ribbons that can be tied on to string pegs when certain goals are achieved. To ensure that students are engaged in self-regulation, teachers can invite learners to share in the creation of self-monitoring systems. The learner can then use the system to monitor behavior independently. Many graduate students addressed the importance of self-assessment and reflection, most frequently citing the use of self-evaluations of rehearsals and performances.

After concerts, we watch the video of the concert in class, and I try to come up with a creative writing assignment that involves them critiquing themselves. One example of something I’ve used in the past is a R.A.F.T (Role Audience Format Topic). I had their

Role be a music critic for a newspaper or magazine; they got to pick and create their own papers or magazine names. The Audience was of course the readers of the articles, which would be classmates. The Format was at least a 3 paragraph, with complete sentences, typed or written (for those who didn't have access to a computer, journal article. The Topic was, of course, the concert. I gave them guidelines for what they needed in each of the paragraphs. I actually had a lot of students really get into what they were doing and enjoyed sharing their articles, which I read and gave them a grade for.

### Conclusion

When teachers employ Universal Design for Learning as a framework for lesson planning, teaching, and learning very few additional accommodations or modifications are needed. By systematically gathering and synthesizing graduate students' Universal Design for Learning ideas, as a result of their teacher in-service experiences, shared ideas become shared *ideals* with the promise of a music and arts education that provides meaningful artistic participation for all students.

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Figure 1. Universal Design for Learning Principles and Guidelines (CAST, 2011).

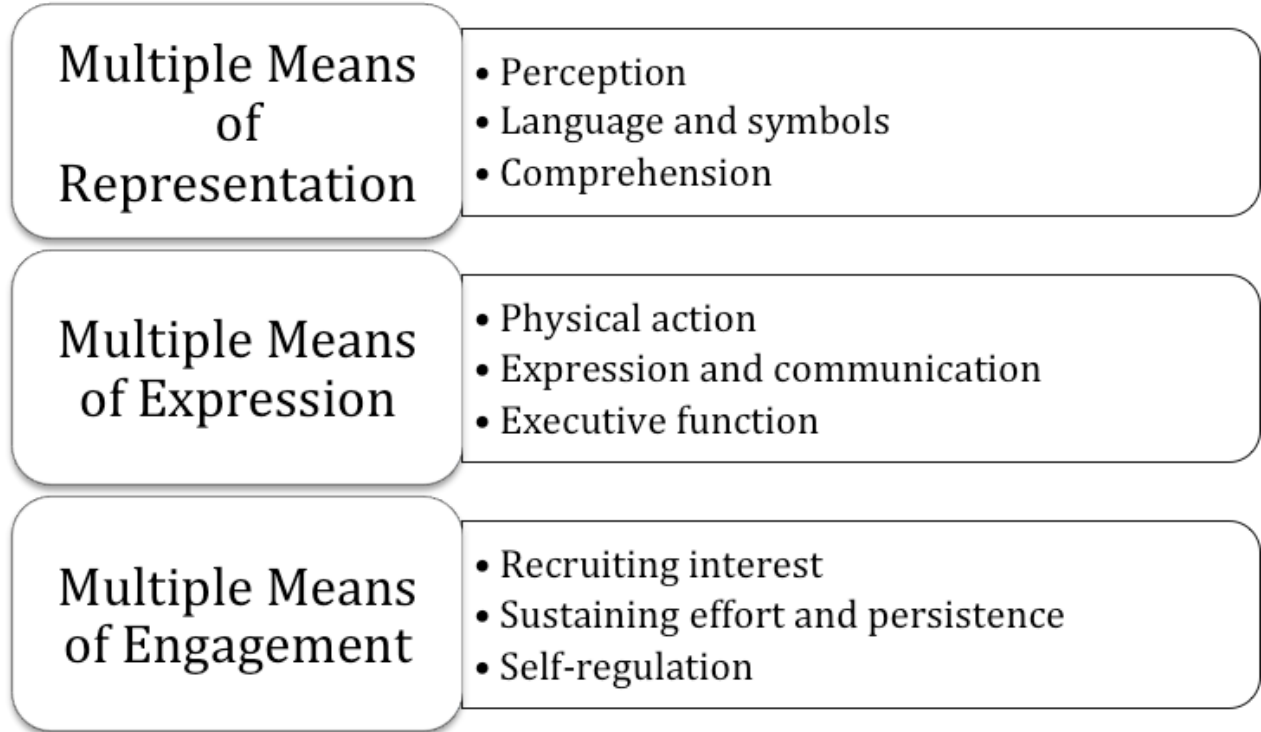


Figure 2. UDL Principle 1, Guidelines 1-3, and Strategies (CAST, 2011).

UDL Principle 1-Provide multiple means of representation		
UDL Guideline 1-Provide options for perception	UDL Guideline 2-Provide options for language, expressions, and symbols	UDL Guideline 3-Provide options for comprehension
<p><b>1.1 Customize the display of information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust print materials: de-clutter, highlight, color code</li> <li>• Project music/handouts to allow for guided use</li> <li>• Vary musical elements (pitch, tempo, etc.) *Audiosnail (alters tempo while maintaining pitch)</li> </ul> <p><b>1.2 &amp; 1.3 Provide alternatives for audio/visual materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use manipulatives for note values, phrase contour, form, etc.</li> <li>• Vary visual representations through videos, pictures, graphics, word webs, digital posters</li> <li>* Glogster (digital multimedia posters)</li> <li>• SMARTBoard, document camera (instrument families, symbols, terms, projected scores for guided listening and singing/playing)</li> <li>• Engage students in teacher-led movement</li> </ul>	<p><b>2.1 Clarify vocabulary and symbols</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use traditional bulletin boards to illustrate concepts</li> <li>• Project vocabulary with embedded links if possible</li> </ul> <p><b>2.2 Clarify syntax and structure</b></p> <p><b>2.3 Decode text, notation, and symbols</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a systematic approach to reading notation</li> <li>• Project solfège/sight singing or write exercises on a board</li> <li>• Use hand signs or body movement to reinforce pitch differences</li> <li>• Choral/vocal environment (all sing focus of attention on one part)</li> </ul> <p><b>2.5 Illustrate through multiple media</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-teach music (recordings, online website materials, YouTube channel with recordings of rehearsals, etc.)</li> <li>* <i>Noteflight</i> (vary complexity of notation displayed, layered listening, adjustable playback)</li> </ul>	<p><b>3.1 Activate background knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make connections with prior musical encounters</li> <li>• Make connections to popular music</li> </ul> <p><b>3.2 Highlight critical features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create musical materials with fewer items on the page</li> <li>• Highlight individual voice or instrument parts</li> </ul> <p><b>3.3 Guide information processing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task analysis (isolate elements of music pitch, rhythm, etc.)</li> <li>• Orff process (varied repetition, connecting speech to rhythmic understanding, and movement to connect physically to music)</li> </ul> <p><b>3.4 Support memory and transfer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide models of final products</li> <li>• Use varied repetition (all activities around one concept)</li> <li>• Use mnemonic devices to reinforce concepts</li> </ul>

Figure 3. UDL Principle 2, Guidelines 4-6, and Strategies (CAST, 2011).

UDL Principle 2-Provide multiple means of action and expression		
UDL Guideline 4-Provide options for physical action	UDL Guideline 5-Provide for flexibility in expression and communication	UDL Guideline 6-Provide options for executive functions
<p><b>4.1 Response and navigation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use portable or classroom whiteboards or tablets</li> <li>• Provide additional time for student responses</li> <li>• Think-Pair-Share</li> <li>• Cooperative and individual learning-singing, playing, improvising, and composing</li> <li>• Sing/play compositions rather than notate</li> <li>• Use alternate assessments (verbal quiz, playing test options, etc.)</li> <li>• Alter playing tests using video recordings or testing in front of small group rather than entire class</li> <li>• Use movement (ex. move hands close together or far apart to show contrast in dynamics, or using varying actions to demonstrate understanding of form)</li> <li>• Lyrics or melody rewrites</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 Tools and technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Games and apps (ear training, music literacy, improvisation, accompaniments, rehearsal tools)</li> <li>* <i>Garageband, Noteflight, Bloom</i> (other composition tools)</li> </ul>	<p><b>5.1 Media for communication (composition)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow students to present work using a variety of media (Power Point, Prezi, Keynote, drawings, cartoons)</li> </ul> <p><b>5.2 Tools for composition and construction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notation and improvisation programs/apps</li> <li>• Experimental/alternative composition tools</li> <li>• Partial completion of composition elements</li> </ul> <p><b>5.3 Support for practice and performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checklists for performance skills</li> <li>• Varying and solidifying practice routines (Smart Music, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>6.1 Guide goal setting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group/individual objectives and sequence in written form</li> <li>• Student-developed goals and objectives with teacher guidance</li> <li>• Checklists</li> </ul> <p><b>6.2 Support planning and strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journals</li> <li>• Models/Peer Models</li> <li>• 6.3 Manage information and resources</li> <li>• Provide specific, frequent, and immediate feedback</li> <li>• Insert frequent questions for monitoring</li> </ul> <p><b>6.4 Monitoring progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use checklists, charts, graphs to show student progress-specifically charting <i>improvement</i></li> </ul>

**Figure 4. UDL Principle 3, Guidelines 7-9, and Strategies (CAST, 2011).**

UDL Principle 3-Provide multiple means of engagement		
UDL Guideline 7-Optimize and recruit student interest	UDL Guideline 8-Optimize sustained effort and persistence	UDL Guideline 9-Provide options for self-regulation
<p><b>7.1 Individual choice and autonomy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow student choice of musical materials or assignments</li> <li>• Encourage student input on musical decisions</li> <li>• Ensure social/cultural relevance to enhance meaning</li> <li>• Use baseline assessment and follow up measures to show progress</li> <li>• Movement-allow students to make up actions/dances</li> </ul> <p><b>7.2 Enhance relevance and authenticity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on student interests</li> <li>• Allow students to lead activities/warm-ups</li> </ul> <p><b>7.3 Minimize threats and distractions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide comfort through predictable routines</li> <li>• Work through performance anxiety issues as a group</li> <li>• Provide frequent opportunities to play solos, duets to lessen pressure in assessment or performance situations</li> </ul>	<p><b>8.1 Heighten salience of objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group emphasis on goals</li> <li>• State objectives frequently</li> </ul> <p><b>8.2 Optimize challenge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to reach successive approximations to goals</li> <li>• Measure progress individually</li> </ul> <p><b>8.3 Foster collaboration and community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize small groups, partnerships, etc.</li> <li>• Frequent incorporation of games-student choice-music basketball/baseball, review</li> <li>• Provide and/or encourage out of class opportunities for music engagement</li> </ul> <p><b>8.4 Mastery-oriented feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize effort as well as achievement</li> </ul>	<p><b>9.1 Optimize motivation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide awards for achievement (sticker charts, etc.)</li> <li>• Be creative with reinforcement (ex. students earn a different colored Karate belt for completing certain tasks-colored ribbon tied onto pegs on stringed instrument)</li> </ul> <p><b>9.2 Facilitate coping skills</b></p> <p><b>9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-evaluation rehearsal/performance-formal and informal</li> </ul>

Figure 5. Shapenote examples. C major scale in the fasola tradition. New Britain from The Sacred Harp, (Grayson, 2012).



C major scale, written to show how the shapes appear in whole, half, quarter, and eighth notes.

## New Britain

### from the Original Sacred Harp

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'New Britain' from the Original Sacred Harp. It consists of four staves of music in 3/4 time. The lyrics are written below the first three staves. The melody is primarily in the tenor line (the second staff).

1. A - maz-ing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me  
 2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears re-lieved;  
 3. Thro' ma - ny dan-gers, toils and snares, I have al-read - y come;

The familiar melody is found in the Tenor line.

# Developing Curricula and Assessment Tools for the Physically Integrated Dance Class

MARK TOMASIC

Physically integrated dance unites the talents of dancers both with and without disabilities. Its roots are based in the disability rights movement and the disability arts movement that emerged amidst the social and cultural upheaval in the United States in the 1960's and 1970's (Benjamin, 2002). The early years of physically integrated dance consisted of individuals and small groups exploring movement vocabulary on their own and sharing that vocabulary with fellow dancers and groups of students. Today, the field of physically integrated dance has expanded worldwide and includes professional companies, community organizations, individual artists, educators, and dancers who practice and perform dances ranging from hip-hop to ballet. However, despite this expansion, huge gaps remain in access to formalized dance training for people with disabilities.

In 1990, the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) assured equality of opportunity and full participation for people with disabilities (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). While equality of opportunity can be provided through modification of devices or equipment (i.e., an elevator for a person who is physically unable to climb stairs, or a book translated to Braille for a person who is blind), providing full participation is a more complex undertaking replete with innate challenges and rewards. Adam Benjamin, co-founder of London's physically integrated Candoco Dance Company, notes the discrepancy between providing equal opportunity and full participation in regards to dance training for people with disabilities:

Today, with more and more schools and public buildings being made accessible, the future debate in dance is no longer going to centre on the concrete steps that lead up to the studio, but on the technical ones that confront the disabled student when he or she gains access. (2002, p.8)

Now that people with disabilities have gained equality of opportunity through physical access to locations where dance activities occur, how will full participation be provided?

This paper examines curricula development and assessment in the physically integrated dance setting with emphasis on the inclusionary pedagogic practice of **translation**. Translation

is a key to establishing equitable dance practice while adhering to ADA requirements. Detailed guidelines are provided for creating successful movement, spatial, and temporal translations to facilitate a meaningful physically integrated dance experience for all participants. Readers can gain insight into developing anatomically sound movement vocabulary for dancers with disabilities in relation to their non-disabled peers. Best practices in developing assessment criteria in the physically integrated dance setting are examined with emphasis on the relationship of movement, spatial, and temporal translations to assessment standards.

This article is based in part on the author's 20 year professional relationship with the Dancing Wheels Company & School (as a dancer, choreographer, rehearsal director, and artistic advisor) as well as his MFA research at the University of California, Irvine. The research blended artistic and scientific disciplines in the development of an inclusive modern dance curriculum for dancers with physical disabilities, their non-disabled peers, and teachers. The curriculum encompasses the following components:

- Existing training methods within the Dancing Wheels Company & School:  
Since 1980, the training methods developed and refined by the Dancing Wheels Company & School have contributed to the aesthetic of the Company and provide an essential framework for the training of new dancers entering the Company and School.
- Modern dance concepts and principles:  
The curriculum's modern dance concepts and principles are generally accepted within the modern dance community and shared among various modern dance techniques and ideologies. These principles are expanded upon by Jowitt (1998) and include the following: use of breath as an initiator and supporter of movement; the core body as a center for movement and expressivity; movement of the spine from the vertical axis; emphasis on the pull of gravity and use of weight; and, successional movement, floor work and rebound and suspension.
- Review of scientific research regarding the physiological parameters of wheelchair users:  
Scientific researchers have tended to ignore dancers with disabilities, however many researchers have focused their quantitative studies on wheelchair users who are

non-dancers, including wheelchair athletes and members of the general population. These studies contain a wealth of information on such topics as wheelchair propulsion patterns, muscle recruitment during wheelchair propulsion, incidence and prevalence of impingement injuries and muscular pain for wheelchair users, wheelchair “wheelie” balance strategies, and physiological parameters of wheelchair athletes and non-athletes. This information has been adapted and applied to the inclusive modern dance curriculum to enhance technical proficiency and promote appropriate physical engagement for wheelchair users.

- Results from physiological testing and biomechanical motion analysis of a professional wheelchair dancer:

A first-of-its-kind case study examined physiological parameters and biomechanical motion analysis of a professional wheelchair dancer from the Dancing Wheels Company. The results of the case study allow for an increased understanding of body and wheelchair mechanics in relation to dance specific movement.

- Interviews of current and former dancers from the Dancing Wheels Company & School:

The author individually interviewed twelve current and former dancers (with and without disabilities) from the Dancing Wheels Company & School regarding such topics as learning style preference, receiving feedback, sequence of movement vocabulary during class, and class size. Response to physical discomfort during class and the relationship between the dancer with a physical disability and his or her wheelchair was also investigated.

- Consultation with a physical therapist:

A physical therapist with clinical experience in neurologic and orthopedic rehabilitation, sports medicine and pediatrics, as well as extensive experience in working with dancers with disabilities, served as consultant on the development of training materials.

The physical therapist shared perspectives on appropriateness and effectiveness of movement vocabulary developed for wheelchair users.



## Terminology

Terminology within the Dancing Wheels culture, as in the culture at large, transforms and adjusts with time. Basic terminology developed for ease of description and equality for all participants. Regarding physical disabilities, a person using a wheelchair or seated (with or without disabilities), is referred to as a “sit-down dancer.” A person standing, either a non-disabled dancer or a dancer with a physical disability who may be using crutches is referred to as a “stand-up dancer.” This approach, in accordance with Elin and Boswell’s (2004), serves to “de-emphasizes specific *disability* terms and to underscore *functional capacity*” (p. 6).

## Translation

*Translation* is the primary tool used in the Dancing Wheels training method to facilitate physically integrated dance practice while acknowledging individuality. Translation is a tool that enables sit-down and stand-up dancers to learn together. Physically integrated dance companies, community groups, and individuals may work with different types of translation in different ways and it may be referred to as “adaption,” “adaptation,” or “transposition,” depending on the practitioner. In the Dancing Wheels training method, the definition of translation is expanded upon that of Whatley (2007), as follows:

Translation is a pedagogic tool in which the elements of movement, space, and time are manipulated in order to focus on the anatomical purpose of a movement with the intention of providing an equitable movement experience to all participants, disabled or non-disabled. The practice of translation encourages dancers to identify the intention/goal of a movement and work toward achieving that intention/goal through appropriate physical engagement, individual exploration, and community building activities.

Within the Dancing Wheels training method, translation is referred to as being either **direct** (the same use of the elements of movement, space, and time shared between dancers) or **indirect** (different use of the elements of movement, space, and time shared between dancers). While this text focuses on translation between dancers with and without disabilities, translation can be used as a tool to share movement vocabulary among *all* dancers, as well as to enhance decision-making abilities and improvisation skills in any dance setting. Translations

in the Dancing Wheels training method blend aesthetic considerations with scientific research regarding the physiological parameters of wheelchair users, thus ensuring appropriate physical engagement for populations of varying abilities. Before specific movement vocabulary is examined, an overview of movement, spatial, and temporal translation is provided.

### **Movement Translation**

**Direct Movement Translation** refers to movement that is possible for both dancers with and without disabilities to execute in the same manner. An example may include isolations of the head and neck. An **Indirect Movement Translation** refers to a movement that cannot be directly translated either from the sit-down dancer to the stand-up dancer or from the stand-up dancer to the sit-down dancer in the same manner. A reach of the right leg forward is an example of a movement initiated by a stand-up dancer that might be indirectly translated by a sit-down dancer as a reach of the right arm forward. A wheelchair wheelie (a balance on the rear wheels of the wheelchair) is an example of a movement initiated by a sit-down dancer that might be indirectly translated by a stand-up dancer as a balance on the balls of his or her feet.

Direct and indirect movement translation often occurs at the same time. For example, there will almost always be an indirect movement translation between the legs of the stand-up dancer and the legs of the sit-down dancer (the exception being if the stand-up dancer is seated and not using her or his legs). Therefore, it is possible (and quite probable) that the stand-up and sit-down dancer will experience direct movement translation in the upper body while experiencing indirect movement translation in the lower body.

Movement translation aids in the facilitation of all participants working towards the same movement goal. Spatial and temporal translations will occur as a natural consequence of employing movement translation and vice-versa. In short, one element of translation cannot be used without involving the other elements.

### **Spatial Translation**

The direction in which a wheelchair can move is either forward or backward on a straight or curved path. This presents one need for the use of spatial translation. For example, if both a stand-up and sit-down dancer are facing front and locomoting (traveling) forward side-by-side, they are utilizing a **direct spatial translation** as they are both following parallel paths in

space. However, if the movement sequence requires the stand-up and sit-down dancers to locomote to the right side while maintaining the body facing forward, the sit-down dancer will need to turn her or his wheelchair a quarter turn to the right, thus changing body direction and implementing an **indirect spatial translation**.

Indirect spatial translation may also be used to modify spatial patterns based on level of spinal cord injury, type of wheelchair, and physiology of the dancer. For instance, a spatial pattern may need to be adjusted for a power wheelchair user if his or her wheelchair has a low speed setting. The low-speed setting may not allow the dancer to reach the same points in space within the movement sequence at the same time as his or her peers. Since the elements of space and time are interrelated, temporal translation also comes into play in this scenario.

### **Temporal Translation**

Tempo may be altered during dance class based on requirements of the movement sequence (quick jumps versus sustained carriage of the arms or legs) or experience level of participants (beginning students may need to perform certain movement sequences at a more moderate pace than advanced students). Teachers of the physically integrated dance class may also need to manipulate the element of time through the use of temporal translation. For sit-down dancers, elements of timing are linked to physiological parameters, type of wheelchair (standard, lightweight, ultra-lightweight), and wheelchair configuration (including tire pressure, axle placement, and camber of the rear wheels). All of these factors play a role in determining how quickly the wheelchair will respond to propulsion (Beekman & Porter, 1999; Bonninger & Baldwin, 2000; Sawatzky & Kim, 2004). The teacher in the physically integrated setting will need to take these factors into consideration when planning class material, maintain flexibility in setting timing elements, and use direct and indirect temporal translation as needed.

**Direct temporal translation** occurs when sit-down and stand-up dancers execute a movement using the same timing parameters. For example, both dancers reach right arms to the side at shoulder height in two counts then lower the arms in two counts. **Indirect temporal translation** is used when a direct temporal translation is either not possible or not desired for the particular movement vocabulary. Turning sequences offer an example of how indirect

temporal translation may be implemented. During a sequence in which a stand-up dancer is executing a *pirouette* on one leg, he will most likely be able to turn faster than his sit-down counterpart due to the fact he has a smaller point of contact with the floor during the turn (usually the ball of one foot). The sit-down dancer has four points of contact with the floor (two front casters and two back wheels), which will result in a slower velocity of turn and the need for an indirect temporal translation during the turn.

### **Interconnecting Movement, Spatial, and Temporal Translations**

The following four-count phrase illustrates the interconnectedness of movement, spatial, and temporal translations:

A stand-up and a sit-down dancer face front and raise both arms overhead in two counts. The subsequent two counts call for the stand-up and sit-down dancer to execute a quarter turn to the right while keeping the arms overhead. This movement is impossible for the sit-down dancer to execute with his arms remaining overhead as he needs to grasp the push rims to facilitate the quarter turn to the right. The sit-down dancer must lower the arms at some point during the phrase – possibly on the “&” count after the first two counts – turn the wheelchair a quarter turn to the right, and then raise the arms back overhead. In lowering the arms to the push rims to manipulate the wheelchair, the sit-down dancer employs an indirect temporal and movement translation. Turning the wheelchair a quarter turn to the right facilitates a direct spatial translation as both dancers will end up facing the right side of the room.

When planning material for class, the teacher is advised to concentrate on movement translation first, as spatial and temporal translation will naturally result from movement choices.

Teachers must assess the ability of all participants and create appropriate vocabulary for everyone while maintaining the pace of the class. While these practices are required for any dance teacher in any discipline, teachers in the physically integrated dance setting must adapt them to a student population with a broad range of physical abilities.

The following guidelines, which expand upon the recommendations of Nilsen and Darbyshire (1995), can aid in the creation and implementation of successful movement, spatial, and temporal translations.

- Communicate privately and in advance. It is not required for a person with a disability to disclose their disability or illness; however, in communicating with your students (with and without disabilities) before class, you may inquire if there are any issues the students would like to share that may affect their performance in class. This communication could be verbal or in the form of a written or online questionnaire.
- Allow for additional class preparation time when including translations. The amount of time required will vary depending on the level of experience of instructor and dancers, size of class, and overall objectives(s) of the class.
- Understand the movement characteristics of your students in relation to their disabilities to aid in the development of translations.
- Develop and set movement vocabulary for the dancer with the disability first. Partially from lack of access to training, there is a scarcity of dance teachers with disabilities. Often, movement vocabulary is created by the non-disabled teacher for the non-disabled dancer and the dancer with a disability is left to create translations on his/her own. Developing vocabulary for the dancer with a disability first fosters equitability and provides the opportunity for the non-disabled dancer to create and develop new movement vocabulary based on indirect movement translation.
- Base the translation of a specific exercise on the goal(s)/intention(s) of that exercise, not on the notion that the sit-down dancer has to mimic the shape or gesture of the stand-up dancer. Is the goal of the exercise to develop rhythmic awareness, spatial patterning, aerobic endurance, body shaping or another desired objective? Understanding the goal of the exercise and communicating it in advance helps students better understand the translation and prepares them for developing translations of their own.
- Remember that some movement vocabulary and directional changes that may feel “natural” to a stand-up dancer are based on opposition of the upper and lower body (i.e. the cross-lateral opposition found in walking). A sit-down dancer will not necessarily be able to rely on the information provided by cross lateral opposition of the upper and lower body to learn or retain movement vocabulary.

- Observe how students with and without disabilities naturally interpret or translate a movement when they are presented with new movement vocabulary. Using student input can aid in developing effective translations and encourages creative collaboration.
- Find an available wheelchair and begin movement experimentation if you are a non-disabled teacher of students who use wheelchairs. By dancing in a wheelchair, teachers gain a greater understanding of the wheelchair's glide, turning radius, and balance. It is important to note that when non-disabled teachers or dancers train in a wheelchair, they have additional stability and control by using musculature of the torso and legs that may not be available for a dancer with a physical disability.
- Comprehend basic wheelchair function, musculoskeletal stresses caused by manual wheelchair propulsion and efficient propulsion patterns to aid in the creation of movement translations that stress physical safety, body alignment, and movement efficiency.
- Provide assignments. Once students become comfortable with translation, assignments can be given that allow students to develop their own translations. Koch (n.d.) provided movement descriptions that class participants interpret. An example includes: (1) reach diagonally forward high while locomoting in a forward direction; (2) turn in place; and, (3) add a level change while locomoting backwards, etc.
- Explore work between partners/peers to facilitate inventive translation and encourage classroom communication and collaboration.
- Assess skill level and development to create movement vocabulary that challenges each dancer. Dancers with disabilities deserve the same right to be challenged, fail, and succeed as their non-disabled counterparts. Movement translation should be modified as skill levels increase to ensure physical, cognitive, and artistic development.

In designing movement vocabulary for the physically integrated dance class, instructors should be cognizant that adult students with disabilities may not have had access to early dance training. Several factors contribute to a lack of early training including a paucity of

qualified instructors, non-existent physically integrated dance curricula, and accessibility issues. Additionally, since the prevalence of disabilities increases with age, many dancers with disabilities come to the profession later in life (Brault, 2008). People with physical disabilities who are new to dance as adults are often placed in intermediate or advanced level classes and pressured to “catch-up” with non-disabled dancers who have been training for years. As with any student, the instructor must be cognizant of previous dance training, age of participants, and level of experience (in particular, wheelchair users may have previous experience in adaptive sports, which can benefit certain aspects of dance training), and adjust exercises and expectations accordingly.

With forethought and open communication, translation can be a source for invention and creativity, allowing everyone to work towards a desired movement goal; however, translations can create isolation and frustration for participants with and without disabilities when the instructor is not prepared to offer translations or applies them indiscriminately. Dancers with disabilities may feel singled out if translation is viewed as being “done to them” or as an afterthought (Koch, n.d.). Koch pointed to the limitation of adaptations (translations): “My main critique point of the current use of adaptations is, that it is inequitable since it is usually just offered to or demanded of students with disabilities” (n.d., p. 17-18). Ideally, movement translation is used in a circuitous manner between instructor and dancers with and without disabilities, but it should not be expected that students, particularly beginners, will possess the kinesthetic knowledge, analytic, or creative skills required to translate movement on their own (Koch, n.d.).

Dancers with and without disabilities alike indicate frustration if the teacher is not prepared to offer translations. One sit-down dancer noted: “Sometimes classes are more set for a stand-up and the sit-downs need to translate themselves and I feel that’s unfair. We want to learn technique just as much as the stand-up does and instead, we are trying to figure out how to translate” (personal communication, March 2011). Stand-up dancers have also noted the importance of teacher preparation in regards to translation with one stand-up dancer offering the following suggestion: “I feel like there is too much emphasis on the stand-ups. The stand-

ups should be the ones who have to translate it [movement] for themselves because most of us come from a dance background – we should be able to translate the sit-down’s movement into our bodies. That should be our challenge as stand-ups” (personal communication, March 2011).

While movement translation is a valuable tool in the Dancing Wheels training method, it is not necessarily used in all physically integrated dance settings. Each classroom is different and every student, with or without disabilities learns differently. Class size and ratio of dancers with disabilities to dancers without disabilities will affect how and when movement translation is best applied. While movement translation may naturally evolve into a process whereby students become contributors and collaborators, it should be stressed that in a physically integrated dance technique class, responsibility lies with the instructor to develop movement vocabulary equally for students with and without disabilities.

### **Learning Styles**

Acknowledging the individual learning style of each student requires regular adjustment to teaching styles and approaches. Learning styles vary widely and will partially depend on the student’s disability. Some students may exhibit no outward sign of disability but have a hidden disability or have multiple disabilities (both hidden and visible). While one student may rely on visual observation as a learning tool, the student with a visual impairment may need to employ tactile and auditory feedback. Dancing Wheels Company members, both with and without disabilities, exhibit a wide range of learning styles and preferences with a majority confirming visual observation and physical repetition as favored modes of learning movement vocabulary in both classroom and rehearsal settings (personal communication, April, 2011). One dancer with quadriplegia specifically noted the importance of using the mirror for visual feedback regarding body placement since he experienced a lack of sensory feedback in the arms and torso due to level of spinal cord injury (personal communication, March 2011). In addition, an individual with limited or non-existent sensory function may not be able to rely on the feedback provided by repetition of a movement, or “muscle memory” to retain movement phrases or sequencing. In such cases, use of imagery or exploration of the intention behind the movement



may aid in retention of movement patterns. The broad array of learning styles underscores the importance of early instructor/student communication to help ensure an inclusive learning environment for all participants.

### **Assessment and Translation**

Instructors can develop equivalent assessment criteria for both dancers with and without disabilities in the physically integrated dance technique course. Physical articulation is realized as one of several essential components in assessment criteria for dance. Teachers should use the translations they have created as guidelines for the development of assessment criteria. They should review the goal/intention of the movement/exercise and assess students on individual progression toward achieving that goal. The rubric below identifies examples of specific movement vocabulary, the intention/goal of the movement vocabulary, translation of the movement vocabulary, and assessment criteria based on the intention/goal.

Benjamin's (2002, p.8-9) criteria for assessment in the inclusive dance setting included the following:

- The achievement of set and agreed upon physical goals in dance technique
- Demonstrated levels of understanding of dance terminology
- Interpretation and adaption of set material
- Individual performance skills
- Partnering skills
- Communication skills
- Improvisation skills

Assessment criteria will differ with each institution, company, or studio and will vary with age and experience level of participants. The National Standards for Dance Education provides rubrics for assessing students grades K-12 at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. These standards can be adapted for students with physical disabilities. Connecting the intention/goal of the movement vocabulary/exercise to the assessment criteria allows individualized formative assessment throughout the coursework.

## **The Physically Integrated Modern Dance Class**

Progression of a physically integrated modern dance class is outlined below and can be used as a guide for further exploration. It provides information on creating anatomically sound translations based on the physiological parameters of wheelchair users.

### **Beginning — Finding Focus**

The beginning of class sets the tone for the experience to come. If starting class with participants lying on the floor, be cognizant that not all sit-down dancers will transfer out of their wheelchairs. Those who wish to transfer should be invited to do so before the initial rituals of class begin so they will not feel rushed. Beginning with a simple focus on breath pattern is a means to unite the class by centering students' attention (Erkert, 2003). The inherent movement of breath through the body is a commonality shared by all.

Self-contact at the beginning of class encourages awareness of the entire body and prepares the dancer for contact with others. Self-contact can range from a light touch to a deep self-massage and should include areas affected by sensory and/or motor loss. Self-contact can also include the placing of hands on areas of the body where movement is felt from breathing. This subtle work at the beginning of class will help students refine their kinetic sense.

### **Warm-up**

Sit-down and stand-up dancers have different needs for warming-up their bodies due to functional capability. The majority of sit-down dancers in the Dancing Wheels Company prefer to initially warm-up their shoulders, hands, and wrists (personal communication, April 2011). The importance of properly warming-up the shoulder is underscored in light of the fact that the shoulder is the most commonly reported site of injury in manual wheelchair users (Bonninger & Souza, 2002). An injury to the shoulder could prove extremely detrimental to a person who uses his or her arms as a primary mode of locomotion. Dancing Wheels' stand-up dancers prefer to initially warm-up the core, hips, and lower extremities (personal communication, April 2011). Possible common ground for movement vocabulary that stand-up and sit-down dancers can share during the warm-up includes exercises that strengthen and stretch the core while focusing on breath initiation and support. This movement vocabulary can be followed by hip and shoulder range of motion sequences for the stand-up and sit-down dancers respectively.

Of particular importance for sit-down dancers in regards to torso warm-up are stretches that promote the lengthening of the anterior muscles of the torso and shoulder (anterior deltoid, pectoralis) such as the “high release” movement during a contraction and release cycle. These stretches serve to counteract the repetitive movement patterns of wheelchair propulsion and postural adaptations from prolonged periods of sitting.

### **Legs and Feet — Arms and Hands**

After the initial warm-up, focus can be placed on increased articulation of legs and feet (for the stand-up dancer) and arms and hands (for the sit-down dancer). A multitude of indirect movement, spatial, and temporal translations are available for sit-down and stand-up dancers to share; however, teachers of physically integrated dance should not assume that movement vocabulary for the legs of the stand-up dancer will automatically correspond to movement vocabulary for the arms of the sit-down dancer. For this reason, translations within the Dancing Wheels training method are based not solely on aesthetic considerations but also take into account the physiological parameters of dancers who use wheelchairs. As an example, a stand-up dancer externally rotates the hips and stretches one leg and foot forward (*tendu devant* in ballet terminology) and the sit-down dancer is asked to mimic the gesture of the stand-up dancer’s leg with her arm. In this instance both dancers may struggle to understand the point of the movement translation. The exercise can progress beyond the notion of one dancer imitating another and be embodied with physiological understanding and kinetic sense by applying a basic understanding of wheelchair propulsion biomechanics. In the *tendu devant*, external rotation of the glenohumeral (shoulder) joint of the sit-down dancer is used as a means to counterbalance the repeated internal rotation of the arm present during wheelchair propulsion, not as a means to mimic the external rotation of the stand-up dancer’s hips. The counterbalance of this external rotation facilitates muscular balance and potentially decreases shoulder injury (Kulig & Newsam, 2001; Mulroy & Farrokhi, 2004). The above example enables sit-down and stand-up dancers to share direct spatial and temporal translations (facilitating community building through unison use of space and time) with indirect movement translations (facilitating appropriate physical engagement).

Foot/ankle articulations (for stand-up dancers) and wrist/hand articulations (for sit-down dancers) increase dexterity and can take place concurrently. To reiterate, the sit-down dancer does not perform these exercises as a means of mimicking the stand-up dancer; the mobilization of wrists and hands through flexion, extension, and stretching develops strength and articulation while preparing the sit-down dancer for more strenuous movement vocabulary to come. Mobilizing the wrist may also be a means to help prevent carpal tunnel syndrome (compression of the median nerve which runs from the forearm to the hand) which has been found to be prevalent in 40 to 66 percent of manual wheelchair users (Montgomery, 1998; National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2010; Paralyzed Veterans of America, 2005).

### **Locomotor Combinations**

Combinations across the floor begin with locomotor sequences that increase in tempo, range of motion, and spatial design and complexity. These sequences will use a variety of direct and indirect spatial, temporal, and movement translations. The following locomotor combination for the sit-down dancer includes a translation for the stand-up dancer and assessment criteria based on the intention/goal of the exercise:

#### **Four Count Propulsion with Contraction and High Release**

- Counts 1 -& Full push forward with both arms. The hands release from the push rims to the front as the torso contracts. The arms move through a rounded position to the front and continue upward.
- Count 2 Arms continue to travel front and overhead as the torso moves to an upright position.
- Count 3 Execute a high release of the upper torso as the arms continue to circle back, rotating from the shoulder joint to allow the palms to face the floor.
- Counts 4 -& Arms lower and hands return to the push rims as the upper torso returns to the upright starting position.

Repeat until across the floor. After the initial push, the arms maintain a continuous motion until they return to the push rims on count four. The four-count push with contraction

and high release can be executed with one arm for dancers with balance issues and for power wheelchair users operating a joy stick, or without the arm movement with focus placed on the breath pattern during the contraction and release cycle.

**Intention/Goal**

Attention to breath pattern during contraction and release of the torso while maintaining forward locomotion/momentum on a direct pathway.

**Translation**

The four-count propulsion with contraction and high release combines direct movement translation of the upper body and indirect movement translation of the lower body with direct temporal and spatial translations. Stand-up dancers begin with the hips externally rotated. Legs bend during the first two steps with the torso in contraction followed by a rise on the balls of the feet with straight legs for the second two steps with the torso in high release.

**Assessment**

Student connects breath pattern to contraction and release cycle while locomoting through space on a direct pathway.

**Small Jump Combinations**

Small jump combinations are an excellent way for stand-up and sit-down dancers to practice rhythmic awareness, physical articulation, control, speed, stamina, and unison movement. Repeated wheelie bumps (or transient wheelies) for sit-down dancers in which a wheelie is popped but the wheelie balance point is not reached can be indirectly translated as small jumps for stand-up dancers. Sit-down dancers who cannot achieve a wheelie bump due to wheelchair configuration or physiological parameters can use indirect movement translation for small jumps in the following ways:

- Hand claps or rhythmic taps of the thighs or wheelchair on the downbeat of the music or as the stand-up dancer lands from her or his jump.
- Triceps extension: with arms at sides and palms facing front (externally rotating the shoulder joint), reach the arms into backspace while contracting the triceps. Arms reach back on the downbeat of the music or as the stand-up dancer lands from her or his jump.

- **Weight relief lift:** grasp the push rims and wheels or arms rests and push downward, lifting the buttocks off the seat rest while contracting the triceps and pressing down with the scapulas. Lower the buttocks to the seat rest on the downbeat of the music or as the stand-up dancer lands from her or his jump.

### **Movement Combinations**

A movement combination may be presented before, after, or instead of a large jump combination. These larger combinations often incorporate movement vocabulary and sequences presented earlier in class (Erkert, 2003). The movement combination should reflect the overall goal of the entire class (i.e. working with uneven meters or attention to spatial patterning).

### **Large Jump Combinations**

Large jump combinations provide an opportunity for stand-up and sit-down dancers to focus on lengthening the head-tail connection while extending energy from core to distal limbs and beyond. Large jump combinations often travel through space and involve the sit-down dancer generating speed and momentum via propulsion. Teachers should be aware that maximum propulsion speeds differ depending on students' disabilities. Sprint tests involving wheelchair athletes and sedentary individuals have shown low values of power output for individuals with cerebral palsy and cervical spinal cord injury (Van der Woude & Veeger, 2001), and varied values depending on other levels of spinal cord injury (Kulig & Newsam, 2001). Teachers should decide the main movement goal of the exercise and plan groupings of dancers to perform the exercise accordingly. Temporal considerations, spatial patterning, or movement dynamics will often decide the most appropriate groupings of dancers for large jump and locomotor sequences.

### **Cool Down**

An appropriate cool down for modern dance class, physically integrated or otherwise, varies depending on the goals of the class and the specific movement vocabulary performed within the class (Erkert, 2003). If the class includes several small and large jump combinations for the stand-up dancers and rapid propulsion for the sit-down dancers, stretching of the lower

and upper body respectively might be in order. Stretching should be approached in a gentle manner, particularly at the end of class when the muscle-tendon complex may already be fatigued (Deighan, 2005).

### **Class Ending**

A shared breathing pattern repeated from the beginning of class offers the opportunity to re-focus energy and engage students as a community for one final moment. Since working in a physically integrated dance setting may be a new experience for all participants, including the teacher, a short discussion regarding the experience of the participants may be in order. This is also a way for teachers to gauge effectiveness of movement vocabulary and translations introduced during class.

### **Conclusion**

The training methods outlined in this article merge artistic and scientific disciplines to provide practical guidelines for teachers of students with and without physical disabilities, while facilitating safe and effective dance practice for wheelchair users. Although these training methods were created to be as comprehensive as possible, full participation in the arts for people with disabilities will not be possible solely through one method, technique, or ideology. It is through the recognition, support, and collaboration of multiple artists, advocates, and disciplines that full participation will be realized. Further artistic and scientific research is required to continue the development of dance training practices for people with disabilities that equal those available to their non-disabled counterparts. Additional research could spark a proliferation of not only dancers with disabilities, but also dance teachers, choreographers, directors, and arts managers.

Enhancing opportunities for people with disabilities in dance has the potential to benefit the entire dance field by expanding the range of artistic possibilities not only for dancers with disabilities, but also for non-disabled dancers, teachers, and choreographers. This broadened spectrum of artistic possibilities can push the boundaries of what dance is and can be, while altering the perception of what is possible for a person with a disability in our

society. As the boundaries of “dance” (the art form), and “physically integrated dance” (the field) continue to shift, merge, and be redefined, there is a singular need to offer equality of opportunity *and* full participation in all dance forms to people of all abilities.

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Figure 1. Movement Rubric

Movement Vocabulary	Intention/Goal	Translation(s)	Assessment Criteria
Contraction and release of the torso	Connection of breath pattern to contraction and release cycle	All dancers: exhale upon contraction of torso and inhale upon release of torso. Sit-down dancers may grasp wheelchair frame or push-rims for added stability.	Student breath pattern is connected to the contraction and release cycle with allowances made for range of motion of the torso based on functional capacity.
Sustained wheelie	Balance	<p><b>For sit-down dancer:</b> a full wheelie (front casters held off the floor) or depending on functional ability and wheelchair configuration, a balance <i>without</i> a wheelie with one or two arms reaching front, side or overhead.</p> <p><b>For stand-up dancer:</b> balance on one or two feet.</p>	Student maintains a sustained balance based on her or his functional ability.
Wheelie bumps (or transient wheelies) in which a wheelie is popped but the wheelie balance point is not reached and the casters are tapped repetitively on the floor.	Rhythmic acuity (identify downbeat of music and maintain a consistent rhythm).	<p><b>For sit-down dancer:</b></p> <p>Wheelie bumps or:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand claps or rhythmic taps of the thighs on the downbeat of the music.</li> <li>• Triceps extension: Arms reach back on the downbeat of the music.</li> <li>• Weight relief lift: lift the buttocks off the seat rest of the wheelchair. Lower the buttocks to the seat rest on the downbeat of the music.</li> </ul> <p><b>For stand-up dancer:</b></p> <p>Continuous small jumps in 1<sup>st</sup> position.</p>	Student identifies the downbeat of the music and maintains a consistent rhythm.





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