

Introduction to Inaugural Issue of the Journal for the Arts and Special Education

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This introduction to the inaugural issue of the *Journal for the Arts and Special Education* describes the key contributions from individuals and organizations to mark a significant milestone, as the field of the arts and special education takes its place alongside the many fields of study that have long formed our theoretical foundations, including education, human development, disability studies, and creativity.

Considering these foundations, we recognize and celebrate Dr. James Catterall's brilliance, as his innovative research on human cognition and creative capacities underscores the essential role of the arts in education. We honor Dr. Catterall's contributions formally in this inaugural issue, with hope that our readership finds connections to the creative capacities tapped within their own work and lives.

Catterall's deeply inquisitive research supports the research, policy, and practice groundwork in arts and education, as well as in special education and the arts. Decades of seminal contributions to our allied field include the initiation and development of the *Journal of the Arts and Learning*, the *Champions of Change* volume, the CROC laboratory and its research investigations, as well as Dr. Catterall's sustained support and mentoring of colleagues and friends, all of us working toward shared goals is making the world a better place for everyone in and through the arts.

The contributions of the formal union between the arts and special education are more recent but no less transformative. In 2012, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts convened thought leaders from the allied fields of arts education, special education, and disability studies to address the changing educational landscape for students with disabilities learning through and in the arts. This initial convening brought together a rich and varied tapestry of professionals, including artists, arts educators, general educators, special educators, allied service providers (e.g., occupational and speech-language therapists), arts therapists, arts researchers, disability researchers, policymakers, advocates, families, education researchers, and special education researchers. The outcome of this convening was a set of recommendations aimed at identifying diverse ways of validating arts learning for students with disabilities through research, policy, and practice. Among these recommendations was an annual gathering

to build capacity, synthesize new research, and promote cross-disciplinary collaboration to advance the field. The *VSA Intersections: Arts and Special Education Conference*, a Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts, has convened annually since 2013. Its focus on cross-disciplinary collaboration has sparked other associations, including the Council for Exceptional Children's most recent division for the arts and special education, the Division of Visual and Performing Arts Education (DARTS), and broadened the reach of existing groups like the National Art Education Association's special interest group, Special Needs in Art Education.

A second set of recommendations from the 2012 National Forum focused on the role of research in advancing the field of arts and special education. To this end, later in 2012 the Kennedy Center published the first volume of a series of professional papers, entitled *Exemplary Programs and Approaches*, which has highlighted emerging research, model programs, and promising practices in the field of arts and special education. Thirty-one peer-reviewed papers have been published in the four volumes of *Exemplary Programs and Approaches*, significantly contributing to the extant body of literature in the arts and special education. This work has laid the foundation for the *Journal of the Arts and Special Education (JASE)*. Jane Burnette, co-editor of JASE, worked with Jenna Gabriel on three of the *Exemplary Programs and Approaches* volumes—solidifying a relationship between the Kennedy Center and DARTS that lives at

the synthesis of policy, research, and practice. Alida Anderson, co-editor of JASE, has contributed papers in the volumes of *Exemplary Programs and Approaches* with colleagues. In 2015, Anderson edited the seminal textbook *Arts Integration and Special Education*, in which Dr. Catterall wrote a visionary chapter reflecting on the directions for our allied field. True to Dr. Catterall's vision and wisdom, this rapid increase in number of high-quality academic publications in our field cannot be understated.

In 2016, as the body of literature was growing, the Kennedy Center again convened a group of thought leaders—this time researchers—with the goal of articulating an ambitious agenda for rigorous research in the field. Published a year later in 2017, *The Arts and Special Education: A Map for Research* has offered a series of milestones that, over the course of five years, would exemplify progress toward the field's growth. The field's first handbook, edited by Dr. Jean Crockett and Sharon Malley, was published in late 2017. The advent of JASE in October 2019 marks accomplishment of yet another collaborative milestone reached in the field of arts and special education.

Which brings us to the question of, "Why now?" Why is this moment ripe for another key step forward in our field of arts and special education? The passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* in 2015 has formalized the value of the arts as part of a well-rounded education. We know ethically, morally, and legally that arts in education

promotes access and opportunity. Catterall's granular investigations of the nature of creativity show us the why and how of its importance for our students, and how detrimental a lack of access to creative content and approaches in learning and teaching can be. Our students with exceptionalities require and are entitled to individualized instructional approaches. True "access" to arts and special education relies upon a body of feasible, credible, evidence-based approaches that meaningfully engage students in and through the arts.

The four papers that follow in this inaugural issue reflect the field's past and present landscape and share promising ideas that offer much hope for the future in the arts and special education.

The first paper by leading expert and pioneer Dr. Beverly Gerber reviews the history of the arts and special education from a multidisciplinary perspective. In her recounting of the field's beginnings, Gerber lays the groundwork for policy, research, and practice through professional collaboratives. As a key focus of this inaugural issue is to highlight the role of creativity in the field of the arts and special education, Gerber's position paper articulates the art and science of discovery and innovation through professional bridge building.

The next paper, by Eve Müller, Diane Nutting, and Katie Keddell, shares the program outcomes of *ArtAbility*, a multi-genre arts program for middle school students with autism. Qualitative and quantitative evaluations of this model program indicated

positive effects on students' social-emotional functioning, including skills critical to success in educational environments such as self-advocacy, confidence, and peer relations. By explicating specific processes and structures utilized in *ArtAbility* programming, the authors underscore the importance of creative learning opportunities and offer replicable program characteristics.

The third paper by Rhoda Bernard provides a thoughtful and thorough review of music education and special education resources. Bernard's creative analogy between the path to professional resources and the use of the transit system in a major US city underscores our continued need for advocacy, policymaking, legislation, and professional development to ensure access and equity in the arts and special education.

Finally, authors Anderson, Farrand, Dobson, Oakes, Deeg, and Valero present three approaches for using drama strategies with preschool through adolescent aged students with and without disabilities in an arts integration framework. This paper highlights the diversity of approaches that can be used across a variety of educational settings to address individual students' developmental needs in social-emotional/behavior, language, motor, and cognition areas. The diversity of approaches, settings, and learner outcomes support enhanced creativity in education opportunities not only for students, but for educators as well. This paper highlights directions for research and policy to advance the field of the arts and special education.

Undoubtedly the coming years will continue to bring about exciting and creative studies in this area, bridging varied disciplines and connecting policy, research, and practice to ensure access and equity in and through the arts for individuals with exceptionalities. The *Journal of the arts and special Education* provides an outlet for this important work. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this inaugural issue. We wish to express our thanks to Jane Burnette, Co-Editor of JASE. We also express our thanks to the CEC DARTS Executive Committee and Publications Committee for their support,

and to the Kennedy Center's Office of VSA and Accessibility for their leadership in the field. Finally, thanks to our JASE authors for their interesting contributions, to the reviewers for improving the quality of the manuscripts, and to the editorial staff for their help in the production of this first issue.

All four volumes of *Exemplary Programs and Approaches* and *The Arts and Special Education: A Map for Research* can be found at https://education.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/resources/edu_papers.cfm

Dedicated to Dr. James Catterall, 1948-2017

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