

The Road to DARTS: Recognizing the Improbable and Steering Around the “No’s”

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Abstract. *Arts/special education professionals new to our field now have choices of organizations with supportive colleagues. For example, they can become members of the Council for Exceptional Children’s Division of Visual and Performing Arts Education (DARTS) and/or the National Art Education’s Association’s Special Needs Interest Group (SNAE). These national organizations have annual convention arts/special education presentations and meetings around the country. They provide opportunities to meet colleagues with similar interests and goals. It can get lonely when others see only STEM, not STEAM. In contrast, it is exciting to be surrounded by professionals who teach, research, and advocate for the arts. We have come a long way!*

This article describes the distance that we, in the arts and special education, have come, as well as some bumps along our professional journey. It shares information about both DARTS’ and SNAE’s evolution, and the groundbreaking VSA/Intersections event that brought together visual and performing arts educators with government representatives, parents and students who loved the arts. It also challenges the simple, and too frequent, answer of “NO” while working around that obstacle. After all, we are creative people.

It is an honor to be included in the CEC Division of Visual and Performing Arts Education (DARTS) inaugural issue of *The Journal of the Arts and Special Education (JASE)*. While JASE focuses on research and teaching practices in the visual and performing arts and special education, this paper differs because it offers an overview of the arts and special education events (initiated in 1994) that led to DARTS. The “Road to DARTS” reviews the significant and circuitous distance that the arts and special education field has come in spite of bumps

along our professional journey. It combines our history and closely intertwined professional backgrounds to share events that led to The National Art Education Association’s (NAEA) Special Needs in Art Education’s Interest Group (SNAE) in 2000 and the establishment in 2015 of CEC’s DARTS. It also describes a trail-blazing event in 2012 - The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts – VSA’s Arts/Special Education Intersections Conference that, *for the very first time*, brought leaders from the fields of visual and performing arts

education and special education together. A journey needs a destination, and to conclude this paper, Juliann Dorff, DARTS current President and Past-President of SNAE, offers considerations for future roads for us to take.

None of the arts and special education events described here happened by themselves— as our journey began, few arts and special education initiatives received wide support. In spite of what we in arts-related roles understand about the arts' valuable role in the lives of students with disabilities (Catterall, 1998, 2009; Catterall, Dumais, & Hamptden-Thomas, 2012; Fiske, 2000), recognition from the greater education community has been *neither automatic nor quick* (Guay, 1994; MacPherson, 2004). After all, the education of all students is an ongoing concern, and educational advocacy has pulled our collective energies in many different directions. Back in the 1990's, special education was focused on policies and issues of quality, assessments, accountability, and teacher retention rather than the arts (CEC, 2019).

To further appreciate the need for our journey, imagine special education, art education, music, theatre, and dance education, each with its own professional organization but with little contact, interaction, or collaboration with other arts education organizations, associations, arts therapists, community arts programs, or museum disability educators. That these arts organizations teach the "same" students— individuals with exceptionalities—challenges

us to collaborate. How many more students can the arts reach when special educators and arts educators share their knowledge, teaching experiences, and advocacy? How much more effective could they be?

The impact of a lack of communication between professional arts and special education organizations cannot be underestimated. Until recent years, finding information about the arts and special education has been problematic (Crockett & Malley, 2018; Gerber, Keifer-Boyd & Malley, 2013). The fact that each professional organization uses its own language complicates the sharing of teaching strategies and research in the arts (Gerber & Horoschak, 2012). A major goal of DARTS has been to build bridges that transcend and connect these differences.

Goals of DARTS. Our DARTS goals respond to past separations of arts education and special education and offer collaborations under CEC's national and international special education professional organization. The Division of Visual and Performing Arts was created to build a professional community of special educators, arts educators, arts therapists, and community arts organizations; and to facilitate the sharing of information and to foster collaboration. Formed in 2015, DARTS is CEC's 18th and newest professional division, and our growing membership represents all of these groups.

The CEC division, DARTS, is an advocate for visual and performing arts education experiences for all individuals with

exceptionalities. “Success breeds success” is the old maxim. Our DARTS division publicizes information about successful school and community arts programs in many different formats to encourage their replication and adaptations for more students. Information sharing is offered through CEC’s annual DARTS’ convention presentations and scheduled meetings, through the DARTS website dartsinfo@cec.sped.org or <http://community.cec.sped.org/darts>, and our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cecdarts> as well as at the DARTS Annual Meeting during VSA’s Intersections Conferences. Our DARTS website is the *first* professional website to include *all* of the visual and performing arts education and related organizations. It provides information about arts and special education organizations and includes access to arts and special education colleagues, programs, references and resources, as well as a calendar of upcoming arts and special education conferences - all previously difficult to locate. More arts and special education information is shared through DARTS membership emails, newsletters, and now, through our open-access, peer reviewed journal, JASE.

Encouraging research in the arts and special education is another goal of DARTS. Teachers and educational institutions have long displayed our students’ work through art shows and theatre, music, and dance/movement productions. But research that demonstrates the impact of the arts on both students’ achievements and behaviors has not kept pace with teachers’ reports and anecdotes of students’ life— changing arts

education experiences. To receive attention and funding, we need more arts and special education research to demonstrate what we observe—our students learn and benefit socially and emotionally through the arts (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999; Catterall, Dumais, & Hamptden-Thompson, 2012; Hillier, Greher, Poto, & Dougherty, 2011; Kempe & Tissot, 2012; Mason, Steedly, & Thormann, 2008). Our students need STEAM, including the Arts in their educational planning and programs. STEM is simply not enough! Arts educators and special educators working together bring creative and innovative educational approaches to students with exceptionalities. They are the creative problem solvers who find ways around the educational obstacles.

Responding to “No’s.” Our journey first challenges the simple and too frequent answer of “NO” (e.g., No time, No money, No materials, No space, No equipment). As the parent of a son with Down syndrome who was born before Public Law 94-142 was passed in 1975 and before the educational concepts of “mainstreaming” and “inclusion,” I learned that “No” was just the first step. David Crespi, my Southern Connecticut State University undergraduate ceramics teacher, mentor, and friend, demonstrated how to circumvent some of these “No’s”:

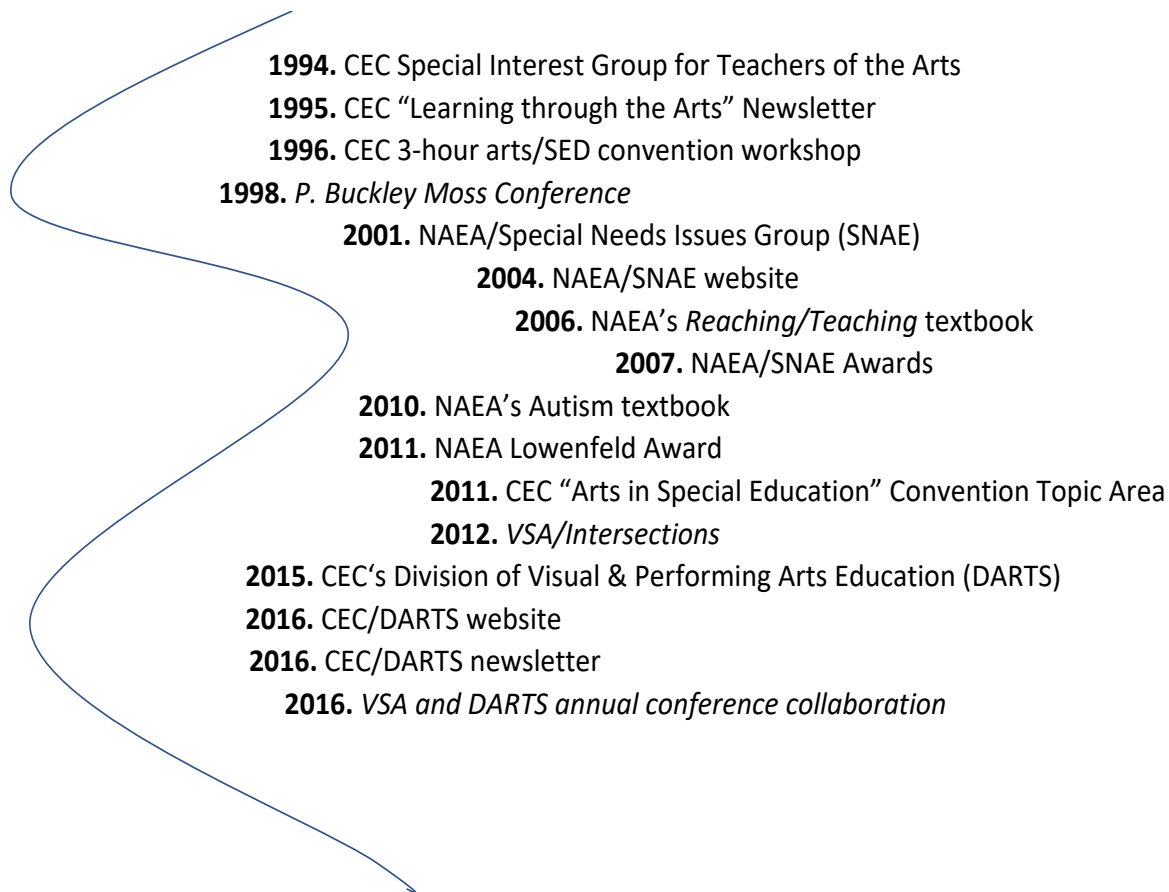
I recall a time when David’s ceramic program desperately needed another pottery wheel. When he tried to order the wheel, he was told there was NO money available for any new equipment. However, he found out that money was

available for replacement parts. So . . . , he ordered separate replacement parts and built a new wheel. The lesson I learned was – Don't accept "No" for an answer. There's usually a creative way to get around an obstacle (Gerber, 2011). And, after all, we are creative people. David Crespi's solution worked around many roadblocks. His strategy plus the *two improbable events* (beyond mere coincidence) described below, encouraged my persistence in advocating to create DARTS, despite bumps in the road.

Background and Overview

Our road to DARTS has *evolved over many years* but *it is not a linear journey*. Instead of a straight line, our history more closely resembles part of a double helix as it curves from CEC on one side of the helix over to NAEA and to VSA and back to CEC again (Figure 1). It has not been an easy journey, but along the way, through conferences and publications, CEC, NAEA, and VSA members learn about, join each other's organizations, and support each other.

Figure 1. The Arts and Special Education at NAEA ,CEC, NAEA, and the Kennedy Center/VSA



My own background combines special education and art education. Both fields were a natural fit as I have long believed that art education and special education teachers try to *focus on their students' abilities* while trying to find creative ways around students' limitations (Gerber 1993, 1994). I learned through my teaching experiences that students who did not respond to traditional teaching approaches could often be reached through the arts. As a result, I have been an advocate for the visual and performing arts for almost 50 years. My teaching career combined art education and special education in public and private schools and in residential settings, initially teaching K-12 students and later, for over 30 years, teaching at the university level. Yet, during those many years, there were few professional colleagues who combined art education and special education and spoke the professional language of each field.

In contrast, today's arts and special educators have choices of professional organizations with many supportive colleagues. They can become members of CEC's DARTS and/or the NAEA's Special Needs Interest Group (SNAE). Both professional organizations hold annual conventions around the country that feature arts and special education presentations and meetings. And, not to be underestimated, they provide ample opportunities to meet educators with similar interests and goals—it can get lonely when colleagues see only STEM and not STEAM. It is exciting to be *surrounded by*

professionals who teach, research, mentor, and *advocate* for the arts!

Both CEC and NAEA are national and international umbrella organizations and their membership size is often comparable (depending on the year and economy). Both CEC and NAEA teach *similar students*, but for years, art educators taught “Ginger Rogers style” . . . dancing backwards and in high heels. For many years (before and after 1975's special education laws), art teachers taught students with special needs *without any special education training* (Guay, 1994). Art teachers requested information about their students but (at that time) many had never heard of an IEP or had access to one. I often wondered why teacher education training connections between CEC and NAEA had not been made. For many years, CEC's and NAEA's former headquarters in Reston, Virginia, were next door to each other on Association Drive. Looking out CEC's windows, one could see NAEA's building, but important information was not shared. That has changed.

Although DARTS and SNAE and their networking opportunities are relatively new, they have come a long way! CEC, for most of its over 90 years, had no Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts or an Arts in Special Education Topic Area or Division. The NAEA's Special Needs Interest Group is less than 20 years old. Changes were made in both organizations, each building on previous arts and special education accomplishments and arts and special education colleagues working together.

The Arts at CEC Conventions

CEC annual conventions offer opportunities for current information and training and networking with colleagues from across this country and other countries. But before DARTS (and its predecessor, the Arts in Special Education Topic Area), arts convention proposals had to be submitted to one of the established CEC divisions (each of whom had their own issues of concern, limited convention space, and limited time)—a big bump in the road. In order to have a proposal accepted, one learned to avoid submitting an arts proposal to the Divisions of Teacher Education Division (TED) and the Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) because their large number of proposals outnumbered their allocated convention times. The arts still had a presence at CEC conventions. For many years the Helen Keller Art Show demonstrated that the arts are accessible, despite visual limitations. CEC's annual "Yes I Can" celebrations often showcased students' music performances.

1994 CEC's "Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts" and "Arts in Special Education" Topic Area ensured arts input in CEC conventions. Before CEC's DARTS was supported by Executive Director Alexander Graham and approved by President James P. Heiden and CEC's Board of Directors in 2015, two small CEC groups met to encourage arts related presentations at CEC conventions and bring arts and special educators together. The first was a "Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts." The second was a CEC Topic Area—"Arts in Special Education" that ensured arts

input in annual CEC convention planning and programs. Each was included in the CEC convention program by the convention coordinator at the time, first by Brian Carroll and later by Anmarie Kallas. Both groups brought arts and special education teachers together for the first time and moved DARTS a step closer to becoming a CEC Division for the arts. I organized meetings for the "Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts" and served as CEC's "Arts in Special Education" Topic Area representative, adding, for the *first* time, members with a background in arts/special education as proposal readers.

CEC provided scheduled time and convention space for our Special Interest Groups (SIG) for Teachers of the Arts. For the first time (please note the number of "firsts" throughout our journey), arts educators had their own SIG meeting and attracted arts and special education convention attendees from around the country. Our meeting was also attended by members of the Division of Visual Impairment (DVI) who supported the Helen Keller Art Show at CEC conventions.

The annual Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts meeting was reassuring to arts educators who finally met others who taught the arts to students with exceptionalities. But for many, attending a CEC convention each year was not possible and an early concern was learning about future arts presenters and their topics. Three arts/special educators, Karenlee Alexander (MN), Lynne Raiser (FL), and I

(CT) decided to keep past attendees informed through a newsletter.

1995 Learning through the Arts connected CEC, the P. Buckley Moss Foundation for Children's Education, and VSA. P. Buckley Moss is a successful and popular artist who paints 19th century scenes of people, animals, and places in the Shenandoah Valley and has a museum of her own artwork there. She also has severe learning disabilities and struggled throughout her school career. An art teacher introduced her to painting and encouraged her to become an art major in college. To encourage young people with disabilities and support the connection between art and special education, she created a foundation for children's education.

Learning through the Arts, a bi-annual newsletter (written by me and supported by the Southern Connecticut Special Education Department) created connections with the P. Buckley Moss foundation, VSA and CEC. It was also a way to encourage more arts and special education presentations and include dates for presentation proposals, CEC conventions, and times and places for CEC's Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts meetings. "Learning through the Arts" information gradually expanded to include summaries of each year's CEC arts presentations and descriptions of other arts and special education organizations and conferences. The newsletter mailing list also grew to include CEC Presidents, Convention Chairs, and others who supported the arts.

Learning through the Arts connected special educators and teachers of the arts for over 6 years. During those years, the Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts met at CEC's annual conventions. The P. Buckley Moss Foundation held three annual art/special education conferences in Virginia (more below). An early connection between VSA (then Very Special Arts) of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and arts/special educators was organized by Stephanie Litvak. Arts and special education representatives from CEC and other organizations were invited to Washington to discuss VSA's summer conference of invited arts presenters from around the world. My invitation was a result of the *Learning through the Arts* newsletter.

1996 "Arts/SED Workshop" provided a block of time for the arts.

Thanks to Brian Carroll, CEC's Conventions and Conference Director, a 3-hour arts and socio-emotional disorders (SED) workshop and presentation (the *first* block of convention time to focus on the arts) was presented in Orlando, FL (Gerber, Alexander, & Raiser, 1996). The presenters reached beyond CEC attendees into the surrounding community and invited art educators from the Orlando area to attend, another *first*.

1996 "Teacher of the Year" awarded to a music teacher. Brenda Robbins, a Florida music teacher was the recipient of CEC's Clarissa Hug Teacher of the Year Award, the *first* arts education teacher to be so honored.

1998 *The first improbable experience led to the involvement of art/SED teacher Adrienne D. Hunter.* In 1998, Brian Carroll, new Director of Education for the P. Buckley Moss Foundation, invited me to Virginia to help plan P. Buckley Moss' first conference on the arts and special education. This was also the *first* national arts/special education conference with invited NAEA arts educators and CEC special educators.

My travel plans were arranged by the Moss Foundation and required a plane change in Newark, New Jersey, on the return trip (an airport I had never used before). The airport was under renovation and the only food available was from a small pizza restaurant. Travelers in the know had already taken every seat but one at the end of a counter that extended into the waiting room. I took it.

My thoughts focused on potential speakers for Moss' art and special education conference. I had just returned from NAEA's convention in Washington, DC and attended sessions presented by art educators who taught students with special needs. One NAEA art educator was an easy choice, Adrienne Hunter (Hunter, 2006, 2018) had described her experiences teaching art to students with social/emotional problems, many of whom came from detention centers. Every seat in her NAEA conference room was filled. An overflow sat on the floor or stood in the hallway. Adrienne Hunter should definitely be invited to speak at the Moss conference, but locating her would be very difficult. I didn't know where

she lived or how to contact her. This was during pre-Internet days and NAEA, unlike CEC, did not list presenters' professional addresses in their convention program. As I puzzled over how to find her, I looked up. Standing next to me was Adrienne! Due to a last minute change in her travel plans, she has just arrived. She, too, had never been to Newark Airport before. We still talk about this unbelievable, improbable event!

2000 *Music and art were popular attractions at CEC's Vancouver convention.* Music education and crayon maker Binney & Smith were popular attractions at CEC's convention in Vancouver, BC. Mary Adamek (IA) (Adamek & Darrow, 2012) brought musical instruments to CEC's convention exposition floor. Sponsored by the West Music Company, the beat of African water drum music engaged everyone, even non-music types. Adamek shared strategies for teaching music to a wide range of students and emphasized that the "music should be adapted to meet the children's needs, not the reverse." And, props and scarves help "students see the flow of their movements."

Diann Berry, Binney & Smith Director of Art Education, Special Needs, brought Crayola Crayon art materials to their second CEC convention. Berry's hands-on workshop, "Teaching through the Senses," was crowded to capacity. It filled early and almost 100 people had to be turned away from the overcrowded room. Berry guided participants through the decision-making and problem-solving process for two art lessons while simultaneously sharing information about techniques for using art

materials. Clearly there was and still is a need for more workshops like Adamek's and Berry's at CEC conventions.

Adamek and Berry attended our Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts meeting. Although we could network at the meeting, we recognized the need to increase our arts presentation numbers for more information about programs, materials, and teaching approaches. We needed arts representation and input on CEC's Convention Program Committee.

2000 *Art teachers voiced their need for more information at NAEA's Convention.* "Are there any special education teachers here?," asked Mary Lou Dallam (PA) over 19 years ago, after her presentation with Barb P. Suplee (PA), "We Need a New Special Issues Division in NAEA: Educating Students with Disabilities." Her question elicited the response, "Aren't we all special education teachers?" It also raised other concerns. Art teachers regularly taught students with exceptionalities, yet most lacked special education training. They were frustrated by special education's "alphabet soup" of acronyms. They wanted more information about their special education students (most had no access to their student's IEP information) and art teachers wanted to be involved in their students' educational plans. They also wanted a dialog with their special education colleagues, beyond the classroom doorway.

Two years earlier, as the special education representative for Judy Burton, my teacher

and mentor at Teachers College, Columbia University, and her research committee presentation, I became a member of NAEA. Following Dallam and Suplee's presentation, Jan Fedorenko (OH) and I were motivated to attend an NAEA Board of Directors meeting. We shared the teachers' concerns and request for a group that focused on teaching students with special needs. We received a "No" from the Board's President. "NAEA," we were told, "did not need another Special Issues Group" (a big bump in the road). . . Working around "No," NAEA's next President was invited to speak at the P. Buckley Moss Foundation arts and special education conference, and petitions began for an NAEA Special Needs in Art Education Issues Group (SNAE).

2000 *The second improbable experience led to NAEA's bestselling book.* A highlight of each NAEA annual convention was a reception given by Binney & Smith (makers of Crayola crayons and other art materials) for the more than 2000 conference attendees. Many food and beverage serving tables were arranged along the sides of the enormous museum reception room. With so many people, long lines formed and moved at a seeming snail's pace towards those tables.

There was ample time to talk to the person next to you. As a newcomer to NAEA, I began a conversation with the woman in front of me and shared that I was a professor of special education and spoke of my interests in the arts and special education. Doris Guay (OH), the woman standing in front of me, voiced her concern

about CEC's seeming lack of interest in art education. I then recognized Doris' name and her concerns, because I had brought several of her articles to read on the plane. Our friendship and professional relationship began that evening and led to our collaboration for NAEA's best-selling book, *Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art* (2006). We both understood the need for this book and brought our backgrounds and our professional colleagues to this collaboration.

How likely was our meeting? I had never met Doris before. Yet, in the dimly-lit Oriental Museum's cavernous reception room, a room with over 2000 people and at least 20 other lines, we stood next to each other! We *had to meet* and to have time to talk! This second improbable experience also defies mere coincidence.

2001 NAEA created the "Special Needs Issues Group" (SNAE). SNAE's founding members were Barb Suplee (PA), Jan Fedorenko (OH), Beverly Levett Gerber (CT), Peter Geisser (RI), (Geisser & Geisser, 2006; Geisser, 2018), and Susan D. Loesl (WI) (Loesl, 2006, 2010, 2012). All are past presidents of SNAE. Their faces were familiar to the many NAEA petition signers. Petitions for SNAE were brought to presentations and meetings. NAEA's members were cornered in hallways, in the Expo Hall, and during the Binney & Smith reception. It was time for an NAEA Special Needs Issues (now Interest) Group. The following year, Barb Suplee was elected as SNAE's first president.

The Special Needs Issues Group was approved by NAEA's Delegate Assembly and Board of Directors to bring art educators focused on students with disabilities together and to begin a dialog with special educators who value the arts. SNAE art educators and CEC special educators collaboratively wrote two books, *Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art* (Gerber & Guay, 2006) and *Understanding Students with Autism through Art* (Gerber & Kellman, 2010). These collaborations combined the knowledge and experience of both professions and became NAEA's best-selling books. Many who contributed to these books later became founding members of DARTS.

2004 NAEA/SNAE created a website. NAEA/SNAE's first website was developed by me at Southern Connecticut State University (*NAEAnews*, Vol.46, No.4, August, 2004). The website made accessible information about SNAE's by-laws, business meeting minutes, and past *NAEAnews* Special Needs columns. It included information about CEC's Special Interest Group for Teachers of the Arts and their bi-annual newsletter, "Learning through the Arts", P. Buckley Moss Foundation's arts/special education conference, a list of SED/Arts organizations, and an SED/Arts reference list and websites.

One *NAEAnews* column described SNAE's new logo, a stick figure "drawn" with lines rolled from gray clay coils pressed onto a red cardboard background. The logo's design was created by Larry Marone (CT),

my son, who had Down syndrome. Upon learning that many people would see his artwork, Larry shared his delight and responded, “Oh boy! Now I’m going to be famous!”

2006 Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art (Gerber & Guay, Eds.) was published. *Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art* was published by NAEA. It soon became and remains NAEA’s best-selling book. Chapters were written by both art educators and special educators who brought over 500 years of combined classroom experience to this textbook for teachers. It emphasized effective teaching methods and behavior management approaches that transcend classroom settings. A retired art teacher recently shared that her annotated copy of *Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art* was gifted to her new art teacher.

A collaborative professional relationship was developed and continues among some of the chapter authors. Adrienne D. Hunter and Beverly H. Johns (with Donalyn Heise) recently wrote *Art for Children Experiencing Psychological Trauma: A Guide for Art Educators and School-based Professionals* (2018). Marilyn Friend, long an advocate for the arts and special education, best describes the positive effects of working together (Friend & Cook, 2010). “In collaboration, participants know that their strengths can be maximized, their weaknesses minimized, and the result will be better for all (p. 22).”

2006 The first multi-art presenter, full-day CEC Art Preconvention Workshop was held. The first CEC Preconvention Workshop to focus on the visual arts took place at CEC’s Annual Convention and Expo in Salt Lake City, Utah. “Learning through Art: Making Decisions, Developing Language, & Healing” was presented by Peter Geisser, Maura Geisser, Adrienne D. Hunter, Susan D. Loesl, and Beverly Levett Gerber.

2007 NAEA/SNAE Awards were established. Two annual NAEA/SNAE Special Needs Art Education Awards were established to recognize outstanding art educators’ commitment to their work with students with special needs. In collaboration with CEC and VSA, the *NAEA/CEC/VSA Beverly Levett Gerber Special Needs Lifetime Achievement Award* and the *NAEA/CEC/VSA Peter J. Geisser Special Needs Outstanding Art Educator Award* are presented each year at NAEA’s annual convention.

2010 Understanding Students with Autism through Art (Gerber & Kellman, Eds.) was published. *Understanding Students with Autism through Art* was written in response to art teachers’ requests for information about students on the autism spectrum. Like *Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art*, it is a collaboration between art educators and special educators, museum educators, and this time, a neuroscientist. It, too, became a best-selling textbook. The need for special education information for art educators continues.

2011 CEC's Arts in Special Education Topic Area was created. The Arts in Special Education Topic Area received arts convention proposals and was included in CEC's "Call for Proposals." Proposal readers had backgrounds in the arts. I served as the Arts in Special Education representative on CEC's Program Advisement Committee. For the *first time*, those who taught art, music, theatre, and dance to special populations could submit their proposals to a group knowledgeable about and dedicated to the arts.

The Arts in Special Education Topic Area would not have been possible without the support of Marilyn Friend, then CEC's president, Anmarie Kallas, CEC Conventions and Conference Director, and Lynn and Doug Fuchs, Chairs of CEC's Program Advisory Committee.

2011 NAEA's Lowenfeld Award was presented to a special educator. NAEA's prestigious award was presented, for the *first time*, to a special educator and I was honored to be the recipient. My Lowenfeld Award Lecture, "Art Education and Special Education: A Promising Partnership," focused on the growing collaboration between teachers of both the arts and special education (www.arteducators.org).

2012 The Kennedy Center/VSA began holding annual national forums. The Kennedy Center/VSA's "A National Forum to Examine the Intersection of Arts Education and Special Education" invited representatives from diverse visual and performing arts education, arts therapies,

special education, government education representatives, and parents together for the *first time*. Organized by Betty R. Siegel, Director of VSA and Accessibility and Sharon M. Malley (Malley, 2012; Malley & Silverstein, 2014), this conference generated much excitement. But, at that time, that excitement had nowhere to go. There was no national professional organization to bring visual and performing arts and special education teachers, visual and performing arts and special education therapists, and state and local arts and special education organizations together. At that time, there were no special education/arts education journals to disseminate arts and special education research and teaching practices. That, too, began to change. After each Forum, VSA produced an on-line publication with articles written by conference presenters that expanded concerns and directions introduced during the conference. The VSA *Intersections: Arts and Special Education* program publications became a foundation for JASE, specifically "Next Steps: New Research and Teaching Journals at the Intersection of the Arts and Special Education" (Gerber et al., 2013).

Together for the first time, these educational leaders turned a page on the possibilities of working together. CEC, for over 90 years the national and international special education professional organization, became the logical home for a division that focused on visual and performing arts education for students with disabilities.

2014 CEC's Division of Visual and Performing Arts (DARTS) acquired member support. Petitions were circulated throughout CEC's convention center and adjoining hotels at the 2014 annual convention. If you were a CEC member on an escalator, walking long corridors to meetings, or attending arts presentations, you were probably asked to add your signature in support of a new Division of Visual and Performing Arts Education. DARTS was the chosen acronym. (Try saying DVaPAE.) A visitor from England said that he liked the DARTS acronym so much he wished he was a CEC member and could sign our petition.

2015 The Division of Visual and Performing Arts Education (DARTS) was established. DARTS was introduced by Alexander T. Graham, CEC's Executive Director, and unanimously approved by CEC's President James P. Heiden and Board of Directors. DARTS' first Executive Board members were President – Beverly Levett Gerber (CT); President-Elect – Lynne Horoschak (PA); Secretary – Beverley H. Johns* (IL); Treasurer – Marilyn Friend* (DC), and Delegates Juliann Dorff (OH) and Susan O'Rourke (PA).

- Following CEC guidelines, the Executive Board established DARTS' By-laws.
- The DARTS website was created and updated by Jane Burnette (VA) until 2017 when Sharon Manjack became the DARTS Website Designer. Our URL is

<http://community.cec.sped.org/DARTS> or www.cec.sped.org/darts

- A DARTS Facebook page was developed by Lauren Stichter (PA).
- A DARTS newsletter was developed by Lexi Soboleski (PA).
- Our DARTS logo was designed by Matt Hunter and Adrienne Hunter (PA).

* It is not possible to adequately thank Marilyn Friend and Beverley Johns for their ongoing support and continuing guidance throughout DARTS' development.

2016 VSA/Intersections began hosting DARTS Annual Meetings. CEC Divisions usually hold an annual conference in addition to the CEC convention. Since VSA Intersections' annual conference includes all of the arts, a separate DARTS conference was unnecessary. Betty R. Siegel, Director of VSA and Accessibility, and I initiated collaboration between VSA and DARTS that focused on the annual arts/Intersections conference. DARTS members are part of VSA/Intersection's program planning, have contributed to VSA's on-line publications, and now hold DARTS Executive Board meetings during the VSA Intersections conference. VSA offers a registration discount to DARTS members and VSA's organization members attend CEC conventions and DARTS meetings.

2019 Our DARTS journey leads to this journal. The following quotation adds perspective to our inaugural issue of *JASE*. It comes from "Next Steps: New Research and Teaching Journals at the Intersection of the

Arts and Special Education” (Gerber et al., 2013, p. 11).

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. . . .

However, there are no journals specifically for research and teaching the arts to students with disabilities. Information spans a multitude of professional journals, 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.

Connecting arts and special education colleagues is important in other ways. Joe Parsons (Parsons, Hunter, & Heise, 2018), Past Secretary of SNAE and now a retired Florida art/special educator, shared, “Before SNAE, there was really no place for me at NAEA conventions.” In contrast to Joe’s experience, today’s CEC and NAEA convention attendees can choose among many arts/special education presentations, attend meetings about current arts/special education issues and concerns, and connect

with other arts/special education colleagues from across the country.

Many people made our DARTS a reality. Alex Graham created the acceptance we needed. Marilyn Friend, past DARTS treasurer, surmounted many early technicalities and obstacles. Beverley Johns, DARTS Secretary, shared her remarkable note-taking and synthesizing skills and provided historical context for them. (She continues to do so.) Both Marilyn and Bev generously offered their considerable insights and guidance from DARTS’ early inception and throughout our new division’s organizational development. Lynn Ezell, NAEA’s Publications Editor, guided *Reaching and Teaching Students with Special Needs through Art* (2006) and *Understanding Students with Autism through Art* (2010) along many collaborative pathways and later, became a DARTS proposal reader.

Lynne Horoschak (PA) (Horoschak, 2018; Gerber & Horoschak, 2012) DARTS Past President (who helped found the Master’s in Art Education Program with An Emphasis on Special Populations at Moore College of Art and Design), Stuart A. Gerber (CT) (Gerber & Fedorenko, 2006), Adrienne D. Hunter (PA) (Hunter & Johns, 2006; Hunter, Heise, & Johns, 2018), and Ruth B. Eren (CT) (Eren, 2010) were steadfast in their encouragement and support. The late Jean Lokerson (VA) (Lokerson & Joynes, 2006), Past-President of CEC’s Division of Learning Disabilities (LDA) and CEC’s Pioneers, was a staunch supporter of the arts at CEC since the 90’s. Thanks to Jane Burnette (VA) (Burnette, 2010; Burnette & Lokerson,

2006) who has been a Jill-of-all-trades and talents for Moss, SNAE, VSA, and DARTS. Doug Cheney (WA), Diane Johnson (FL), and Linda Marsal (VA), CEC Past-Presidents and convention program chairs, offered their support along our journey and deserve our thanks, too.

Today's arts and special education professional organizations, CEC's DARTS and NAEA's SNAE exist due to many years of outreach and advocacy. Our journey was successful because many people shared their talents, energies, and interests. Our growing arts and special education professional organization community has connected colleagues from arts education and special education and its members continue to contribute to an ever increasing body of publications (Crockett & Malley, 2018; Hunter, Heise, & Johns, 2018; Kraft & Kiefer-Boyd, 2013) and research (Anderson, 2015; Crockett, Berry, & Anderson, 2015). . . . We have come a long way.

In the next section of this paper, Juliann Dorff, Past President of both CEC's DARTS Division and NAEA/SNAE's Special Interest Group, shares her vision for the future to extend our journey.

Next Steps

As DARTS enters its third year as an official division of CEC, we have just begun our work. Focused on fulfilling our mission statement, our agenda addresses the following areas:

- Continue and strengthen the relationship with The Kennedy

Center VSA, The International Organization for Arts and Disability;

- Foster greater collaboration among the arts and special education;
- Focus on promoting stronger preservice training;
- Provide and build sharing opportunities through Digital Media Outlets;
- Grow membership through outreach to arts educators, arts therapists, community arts organizations, and special educators.

Continue and strengthen the relationship with The Kennedy Center VSA, The International Organization for Arts and Disability. The support of VSA in the development of DARTS cannot be understated. The convening of thought leaders in 2012 was the impetus for DARTS' development. This is an essential relationship as we move forward. Through our collaboration on our journal and our support and involvement in the annual VSA Intersection Conference, we have the ability to further share our research and practice, take a deep dive into the issues addressing our work, and make broader connections with educators across the country.

Foster Greater Collaboration among the Arts and Special Education. DARTS has provided us with a platform to integrate and collaborate with others in the arts and special education. Each year, greater involvement of arts educators in the CEC Convention and Expo adds to the knowledge base of convention participants. They learn how the power of the arts can

impact the lives of all our students. DARTS members' involvement in other CEC Interest Groups supports our work and opens doors to additional collaborations.

From a grassroots level this also means that DARTS members take the opportunity to reach out and work with other arts leaders and special educators in our schools and universities. The arts, by their very nature, provide everyone with different ways of expression. The sensory involvement of the arts provides a "way in" to connect to students. The integration of the arts broadens instructional strategies and provides students the opportunity to experience the success that comes from examining problems with multiple answers.

Focus on Promoting Stronger Preservice Training. As our classrooms represent a variety of diverse learners, this shifts the "needs" from the student to the teacher (Guay, 2019). It is the educator's responsibility to develop instructional strategies, methods and tools to reach each student. This highlights the need for the educators to have specific instruction regarding the theory of how to do this as well as the opportunity to put this theory into practice in the classroom.

Pre-service programs must be encouraged to go beyond simply a course in "teaching students with exceptionalities" and to infuse pre-service educators with a variety of experiential opportunities before their student teaching. These experiences should include cross curricular integrated lessons

that require the arts educator to walk down the hall to engage with other educators and plan units of instruction, develop strategies to differentiate instruction, and work directly with intervention specialists and para-educators (Dorff, 2018).

The age difference between beginning educators and practicing ones is often wide, making young teachers uncomfortable with the leadership role often required in collaborative situations (Dorff, 2012). Preservice arts educators need to have this experience before leaving their preparation programs. Our DARTS is a resource to provide guidance to make this collaboration happen. In addition, research is needed to determine state requirements and identify exemplar programs that can provide models for programs to emulate.

Provide and Build Sharing Opportunities through Digital Media Outlets. In our technological world it is essential that we provide our members with access to research and practice strategies and a forum to share their own successes. Our website is the first place to go for information about submitting proposals to present at the CEC Annual Convention and Expo and The VSA Intersections Conference. Members can find informative articles written by invited guests, recent publications, and additional resources. Our DARTS Facebook page offers one-to-one discussions in real time about what is happening in classrooms today and helps to brainstorm possible best practice solutions.

Grow Membership through Outreach to Arts Educators and Special Educators. The growth of DARTS is very dependent on its current members; therefore, we all are advocates for DARTS membership. The growth of DARTS is essential as we become a community of arts educators, arts therapists, and community arts organizations vested in sharing quality teaching practices and strategies as well as

developing new ones. Each of us needs to spread the word to the people we know who would benefit from membership and bring their expertise to our efforts.

The importance of and need for DARTS has become clear. Based on the knowledge and involvement of our members, our future will continue to provide support, resources, and vital information to them.

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