

Dedication of the *Journal for the Arts and Special Education*, Issue 2

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This introduction to Issue 2 of the *Journal for the Arts and Special Education* (JASE) summarizes the key contributions from individuals and organizations to mark a second significant milestone in the field of the arts and special education, as it forges its path alongside interdisciplinary fields of arts education, critical disability studies, improvement science, and creativity.

Considering these visionary collaborations to ensure access and opportunity in and through the arts, JASE Issue 2 is aptly dedicated to Dr. Don Glass. Dr. Don Glass was an advocate and an innovator through his creative and foundational research and practice on systems thinking, creative problem solving, arts centered educational opportunities, and most dear to his heart, access to learning in and through arts opportunities for youth. We honor Dr. Glass's contributions formally in JASE Issue 2, for his tireless support and advocacy of our Division of Visual and Performing Arts Education (DARTS), of the Council for Exceptional Children, as well as his tenure as Research Manager with the Kennedy Center and as a prolific scholar and artist.

A perusal of [Don's website](#) gives some glimpse into his brilliance and legacy to the field of arts and special education. He created and wrote about improvement science in ways that challenged conventional norms and pushed our allied fields of education way before their time to consider how to meet the needs of individuals who are often left out from representation in our schools, systems, and societies. Thinking about the ways that our assessment systems can showcase students' assets has been at the heart of Don's work with inspired teachers, schools, doctoral students, professors, and so many more. I am honored to be able to describe and convey his gifts in this second issue of JASE. Don was a dedicated champion of JASE and contributed to its inaugural dissemination and place among [the rich digital resources](#) at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. Don always challenged conventional ways of thinking, and in the true spirit of an artist, he looked at problems as having many different solutions.

Don described his work with the following words: "I like to connect the strategic learning dots between big ideas, thoughtful design, disciplined inquiry, and reflective practice." Don was a creative learning designer, developmental evaluator, and visual/media artist. His prolific work explores the use of the translational learning science framework Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in collaborative disciplined inquiry with educators using networked improvement science tools and methods. Don's work has resulted in the design of rich, meaningful, and flexible learning pathways for diverse learners by

systematically improving barrier-free physical and communication accessibility, culturally sustaining content, materials, instruction and assessment, and optimal design for learning variability.

Dr. Glass's innovative, disciplined, responsive, and collaborative inquiries support our ongoing and future research, policy, and practice work in arts and education, as well as in special education and the arts. Over a decade of Dr. Glass's seminal contributions to increasing access to arts-in-education for youth include pioneering works such as, [*The Design and Evaluation of Inclusive Arts Teaching and Learning*](#) (Glass, 2010), [*Using Curriculum Design Frameworks to Make Arts Integration More Meaningful, Flexible, and Engaging*](#) (Glass & Donovan, 2017), [*Universal Design for Learning and the Arts*](#) (Glass, Rose, & Meyer, 2013), [*The Arts Option*](#) (Glass, Blair, & Ganley, 2012), and most recently, *Arts, UDL, and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies* (Glass, Upchurch, Hall, & Adjapong, in press).

We are deeply grateful to Dr. Don Glass for his foundational and sustaining contributions. Professionally and personally, Don was a generous mentor, colleague, and friend. We will miss him dearly and hope that you find his work to be invigorating, supportive, and catalytic for advancing opportunities for children and families in and through the arts and special education.

Creativity flourished during the pandemic as performers and teachers across every arts genre used these challenging times to generate new ideas and ways of being. The Division for Visual and Performing Arts Education (DARTS) noted this and sought a way to share some of the thoughts of arts educators during the pandemic and now as we are beginning to create together again in late 2021. We have been delighted to collaborate with The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Office of Accessibility and VSA to produce and present these new articles in arts education. It was a wonderful opportunity!

Our invited artists and educators come from all areas of arts education: dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. They represent various intersections of the arts and special education in meaningful ways. Their work in this issue is also diverse in methodology, writing style, and focus. We are proud of this eclectic selection of thoughts from artists, teachers, and scholars.

The articles in this journal include:

Authors: Susan Harvey and Susan Loesl

Title: Adaptations for Success in Music and Visual Arts for Students with Learning Differences

Abstract

According to federal law (ESSA), music and visual arts are core classes for all students. Often, arts teachers of students with learning differences are not prepared to include all students in these courses. Music and visual arts teachers' curriculums are unique from the other academics regarding tools for participation such as instruments and paint brushes, but also share similar tasks such as reading, creating text, and communicating one's thoughts. Students presenting challenges that affect their ability to access these curriculums need to be recognized and lesson plans may need accommodations or modifications. When lesson plans include considerations of size, color, pacing, and modality (visual, aural, and kinesthetic), every student experiences music and visual arts in meaningful ways. From simply adapted, low cost tools to technology programs and apps, this work presents strategies for music and visual art teachers to plan and implement in their classes that support students with disabilities.

Author: Kelly M. Gross

Title: The State of Inclusion: Illinois Visual Art Teacher's Preparedness, Support, and Pedagogical Practices for Working with Students with Disabilities

Abstract:

This research is based on the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) commissioned study, *The State of Special Education Professional Report* (Fowler et al., 2019). In the spring of 2020, a modified survey instrument was digitally sent to survey to art teachers in Illinois.¹ The research used a descriptive survey design and was part of a more extensive study examining

¹. An Institutional Review Board approved this survey, and all participants consented prior to participation

inclusive approaches related to disability, curriculum, and pedagogy in prek-12 visual art and design classrooms. This research examines Illinois art teacher's perceptions of preparedness, support, and pedagogy practice leading to successful inclusion of students with disabilities in visual arts classrooms. Information from this survey is compared to results from the CEC study to develop a portrait of the strengths and needs for art teachers to successfully support students with disabilities.

Author: Ryan Hourigan

Title: Providing Access to Arts Education for Students with Learning Differences who are also Challenged by Poverty

Abstract:

This article will focus directly on the relationship between poverty and access to arts education (music, drama, theatre, dance, and visual art) opportunities for students who have with disabilities. Specifically, those students who are also below the poverty line. The aim is to focus on the policies, community structures, and recent events (e.g. COVID-19) that contribute to this issue. In addition, this article will examine success stories as a model for future implementation in K-12 school as well as community partnerships to assist with improving the current climate.

Author: Felice Amato

Title: Hand in Glove: Understanding the Hand Puppet's Life and Liveness as a Precursor to Its Application in Education and Therapy

Abstract:

In this article, Amato discusses how the hand or glove puppet connects intimately to the human body, as well as its role in the expression of the social self. She explores important qualities of the puppet that affect the way it functions, especially at very subtle levels. She describes a variety of insights from teachers and therapists who work in applied puppetry, specifically with students with exceptionalities. These include Maurizio Gioco of Verona Italy, Z Briggs of the Henson Foundation, and Susan Linn. She surveys additional literature on puppets in therapeutic settings. She offers insights and recommendations for ways to integrate puppets into practitioners' work with all students and, in particular, those with exceptionalities.

Author: Antoine Hunter

Title: The Power of the Art of Dance

Abstract: Antoine Hunter writes a powerful and meaningful essay centered on his life growing up as a Black and Deaf person. He focuses on the power of communication and ways dance can cross many perceived barriers to communication. His final words of the essay convey his

thought process in writing this piece – “I always say, just because you can hear doesn’t mean you know how to listen.”

We are proud to publish this issue on both the DARTS website through the Council for Exceptional Children and through the Kennedy Center Office of Accessibility and VSA. We honor both organization for their tireless work in creating spaces for arts educators who focus on special education to meet and learn from each other.

Juliann B. Dorff – Senior lecturer, Kent State University

Alice M. Hammel – Graduate faculty, James Madison University

Adaptations for Success in Music and Visual Arts for Students with Learning Differences

Dr. Susan Harvey
Susan Loesl

Abstract

According to federal law (ESSA), music and visual arts are core classes for all students. Often, arts teachers of students with learning differences are not prepared to include all students in these courses. Music and visual arts teachers' curriculums are unique from the other academics regarding tools for participation such as instruments and paint brushes, but also share similar tasks such as reading, creating text, and communicating one's thoughts. Students presenting challenges that affect their ability to access these curriculums need to be recognized and lesson plans may need accommodations or modifications. When lesson plans include considerations of size, color, pacing, and modality (visual, aural, and kinesthetic), every student experiences music and visual arts in meaningful ways. From simply adapted, low cost tools to technology programs and apps, this work presents strategies for music and visual art teachers to plan and implement in their classes that support students with disabilities

Adaptations for Success in Music and Visual Arts for Students with Learning Differences

Dr. Susan Harvey
Susan Loesl

Introduction

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Public Law No. 114-231, was signed into federal law by President Obama on December 10, 2015. The law includes the arts with other subject areas to create a well rounded education for students. States and school districts determine the extent arts are included with responsibility to, “provide all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience” (Americans For The Arts, 2021). Music and visual arts educators need resources regarding how to teach all students, including students with learning differences.

Research has stated that when educators use adaptations of size, color, pacing, and modality, students with learner differences are presented with multiple means to comprehend and engage with subject matter. By using these adaptations, educators do not focus on labels given to students, but rather on how to teach for learner understanding and comprehension (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017). Harvey and Loesl present ideas for integrating these adaptations into music and arts classrooms.

Size in Music Class

Size is defined by several characteristics, including size of materials, font size and amount of information on materials (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).

Size is easily adapted in the music classroom. Music can be adapted to exclude unnecessary material. Octavos can be rewritten to include only the voice part the student will sing. A student does not need to see the piano part and the other voice parts to learn their part. Music that has two parts at the same time, split parts or percussion parts, can be rewritten for the student to read only the part they will perform.

Music can be enlarged on a copier or scanned on an iPad then enlarged. If students have difficulty reading music expressions due to italics, music can be rewritten using a simpler font. When writing on a white board, use large notation and bold print or consider using an overhead projector.

Size also includes the amount of information a student receives. A new piece of music may be overwhelming. This information can be reduced by giving only the amount the student needs to work on for the day. For example, music expression indications might be too much information for the student. They can be left out and added as needed. Beginning method books have much information on each page. Often new concepts are introduced on the top of the page followed by playing examples. Some method books introduce up to three new notes on a page with placement on the staff and the fingering. To limit this information, a fingering chart book can be created with one note on each page. As students learn new notes, a new card with the new note is added to the book. Each page can be laminated if the student needs to mark a reminder for a certain finger. Music Teachers can use the [Fingering Diagram Builder](#) to create fingering charts for woodwind instruments. Music examples from the method book also can be rewritten with fewer on a page.

Mallet adaptations can be made for percussionists and elementary music students. [American Drum](#) is a company that makes adaptive mallets for students who need shorter length or T-shaped gripped mallets, or who need a cuff to assist with mallet grip. Instruments can be adapted for size. Bars on Orff instruments can be removed to allow students to focus only on notes they will perform. String instruments come in different sizes for students, but wind instruments are less likely to be adapted. However, some adaptations can be made. For example, flutists who have short arms may choose to use a curved head joint on their flute. Students who would like to play trumpet, may choose to play cornet instead. [Jamboxx](#) is “a hands-free electronic, breath controlled” adapted music instrument for students who do not have fine motor skills (Jamboxx, 2021). It can be programmed for different instrument sounds, depending on student-preferred instrument to learn.

Size in Art Class

Size is easily transferable to art making. The size of art tools can affect student engagement with the various materials, as grasping markers, colored pencils or paint brushes is critical for artistic creation. Students who lack fine motor skills can be challenged to firmly grasp traditional art tools that tend to be thin. Students with physical challenges may not have the grip strength to hold the tool to make their marks or may fatigue easily. Students with developmental challenges, such as missing finger digits or short thick hands, may not be able to wrap their fingers around the art tool. For these students, using various added grips to the tool can increase the area in which the students find the best way to hold the tool. The grip may be a preformed grip such as the Abilitations Grip™ into which most thin art tools can be pushed into for a soft, as well as comfortable grip. Other grip options include wrapping the tools with veterinarian’s wrap, SyrVet™, for example, using a grip cut from a plastic milk carton (half gallon for smaller hands, gallon for larger hands) or even wrapping newspaper around the tool and securing with masking can tape can help build the surface for a better grip (see Figure 1). These grips also can be used for students gripping mallets in music class.



Figure 1. Marion, Wisconsin.

Another size consideration is utilizing art materials that are already larger in size. Art educators can look at brands such as Crayola™ or [Prang](#)™ for oversized watercolor palettes, triangle and large egg shaped crayons, 5.5 mm core colored pencils, and other large art tools, which are marketed mostly for early childhood students (see Figure 2).

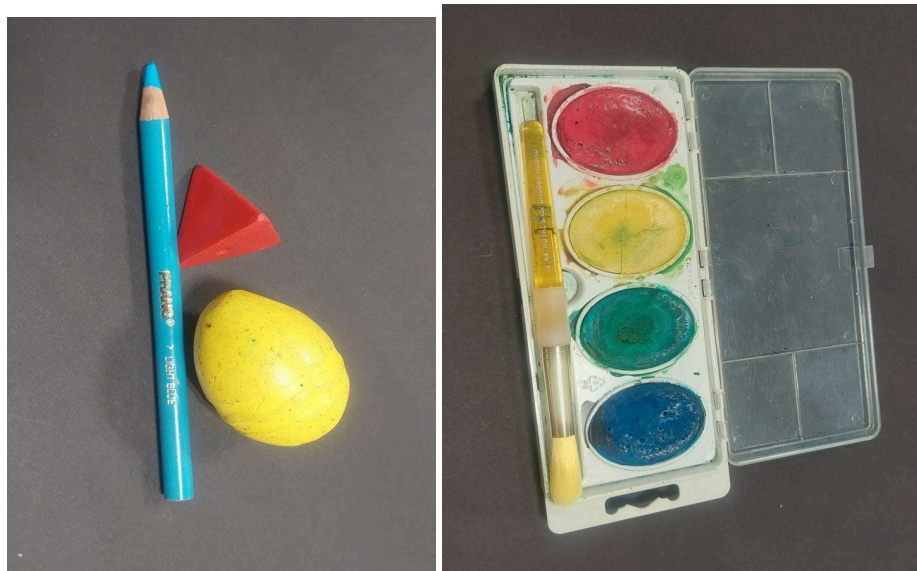


Figure 2. Marion, Wisconsin.

Some students may still require larger sized tools well into high school and unfortunately, most of these larger art materials are labeled something such as, 'My First Crayon' or other indications for a young person. Be aware of the labeling to not insult the student with an age labeled tool. Remove or use a permanent marker to cover over the labeling words so that it looks like a unique art tool. Students that need to use adapted tools may be reluctant to use materials that look babyish and might even prefer to not use any adaptive tools, which may limit their success. It also helps if the art educator utilizes the concepts of UDL (Universal Design for Learning) whereby adapted tools are presented to all students with and without learning differences as tool options. The more adapted tools are a natural part of the tool options, the better the implementation of the most beneficial tools for all students.

Other ways that size can be considered when working with students with learning challenges is to adapt size of the art task. A student task that requires five sentences may be reduced to three sentences for an artist statement or report. Using a speech to text function on classroom computers can support a verbal student who may struggle with the fine motor skills required for typing on a computer. They may create one larger art piece rather than two or three. There may be limits to the number of options such as color or material choices. Minimizing options encourages the student to focus on current tasks, as decision making can be fatiguing or frustrating with too many options. In certain situations, reducing student group size can minimize anxiety when creating art.

The work surface may need to be enlarged or reduced to accommodate students who create from their wheelchairs and are best positioned not at a group table to work. A tabletop easel or writing slant board secured to the wheelchair with C-clamps can be used to bring the larger (or smaller) work surface to a closer and more usable position, especially if the student is in a more supine, or laying down position (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Marion, Wisconsin.

For students who tend to be impulsive, have visual challenges, or require boundaries for success when working near others, a Lazy Susan with elevated edges, a cafeteria tray or cookie sheet can be utilized for individual students' materials. Only materials the student needs will be on those devices. This

minimizes frustration when students need to feel the materials they are using as their vision is limited, or when students are using other students' materials and not sharing well, or when students are developing direction following skills.

Another size consideration is using adapted scissors. There are many scissors available that are not marketed as adaptive. The art educator should look at the student's hands and fingers to see how the student may fit into the finger loops of a traditional pair of school scissors. Small sized hands need smaller loops for control and depending upon the physical potential of the student to use regular scissors, any student may have greater success independently with loop scissors from companies such as PETA™ (see Figure 4). The PETA Mini Easi-Grip Scissors Red™ is a universal useful loop scissors that can be used from kindergarten sized hands through an adult size hand. Art educators can look for oversized finger loop scissors for students with larger hands, oftentimes labeling as a pruning shears such as the Fiskars™ Micro-Tip® pruning shears. Fiskars™ has scissors that meet almost every hand need from early childhood through high school and adult. As mentioned previously, when an art educator provides a variety of art tools for the entire class, students will determine their preferences and will have their creative needs met. At times, adaptive cutting tools are quite engaging and unique for first trials for all students, ensuring that all students have access to what works best for each student.



Figure 4. Marion, Wisconsin.

Color in Music Class

Color is an adaptation to ease eye stress and fatigue. White is bright and reflects light. When black text is on a white background, the brightness can strain the eye. UX Movement recommends “black text on a light background with a tint of gray” for websites (uxmovement, 2021). Students who have diagnosed conditions that affect reading processing may benefit from the adaptation of color. Sometimes reading comprehension is related to “bright lighting, fluorescent lighting, black/white contrast, and continued performance” (Irlen, 2021).

Music is printed mostly with black ink on white paper. A color transparency can be laid on top of the music to lighten the brightness from the white. Transparencies can be different colors. A student who may use this can choose the color that works for them. Transparencies may be purchased, made from colored notebook dividers, or made using an inkjet printer by coloring the page then printing on a clear transparency (see Figure 5).

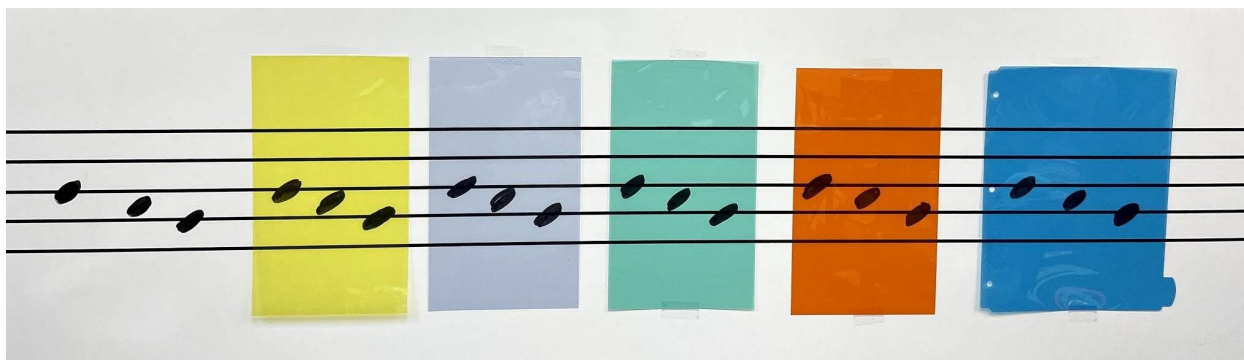


Figure 5. Wichita Falls, Texas.

Erasable highlighters are effective to label music (see Figure 6). Students can highlight notes, rhythms, certain passages, and their part. Learning notes on a staff can be challenging when deciphering when a note is on a line or in a space. Highlighting notes with a different color can assist a student. When the note is learned, the student can erase the highlighted section. Students reading an octavo can highlight their voice part. This allows the student to follow their part without distraction of the piano accompaniment and other voice parts. When writing music, teachers can highlight notes in their music writing software program for students before printing. When using a staffed white board, note heads can be purchased that are one color, such as red and magnets can be placed on the back to use on a magnetic white board. Colored magnetic circles can be purchased to use as noteheads (see Figures 7 and 8). This allows the note head to have clarity on the line or space of the staff, making it easier to see. When creating a fingering chart, incorporate color on the fingerings. If using the [Fingering Diagram Builder](#) for woodwind instruments, color is an option when creating the fingering chart.



Figure 6. Wichita Falls, Texas.

Color may be used on instruments: recorders, string instruments, and piano/keyboards. Notes or strings may be labelled with color to match the color of notes on the music staff. Colored electrical tape, puffy paint (see Figure 7 and 8), or colored self-adhesive paper hole reinforcers can be used to label recorder tone holes, strings, or piano keys.



Figure 7. Wichita Falls Texas.



Figure 8. Wichita Falls, Texas

Students learning solfege may need color adaptations to learn each syllable. [Solfege dot magnets](#) (West Music, 2021) can be placed on a magnetic whiteboard to teach patterns, intervals, melodies, and harmonies (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Wichita Falls, Texas.

Print rhythm and tonal flash cards on colored paper. Different color cards can be used when adding new rhythmic or tonal concepts. For example, rhythm flashcards that have four consecutive sixteenth note patterns as the most difficult skill can be printed on blue paper. Rhythmic flashcards that have an eighth note followed by two sixteenth notes as the hardest rhythm on the flashcard can be printed on red paper. Similarly, rhythms can be written on individual rectangle foam cards for students to write rhythmic compositions (see Figure 10). Color can be used to denote note lengths. This also is a size adaptation. The note head can be spread across the number of designated beats and colored.

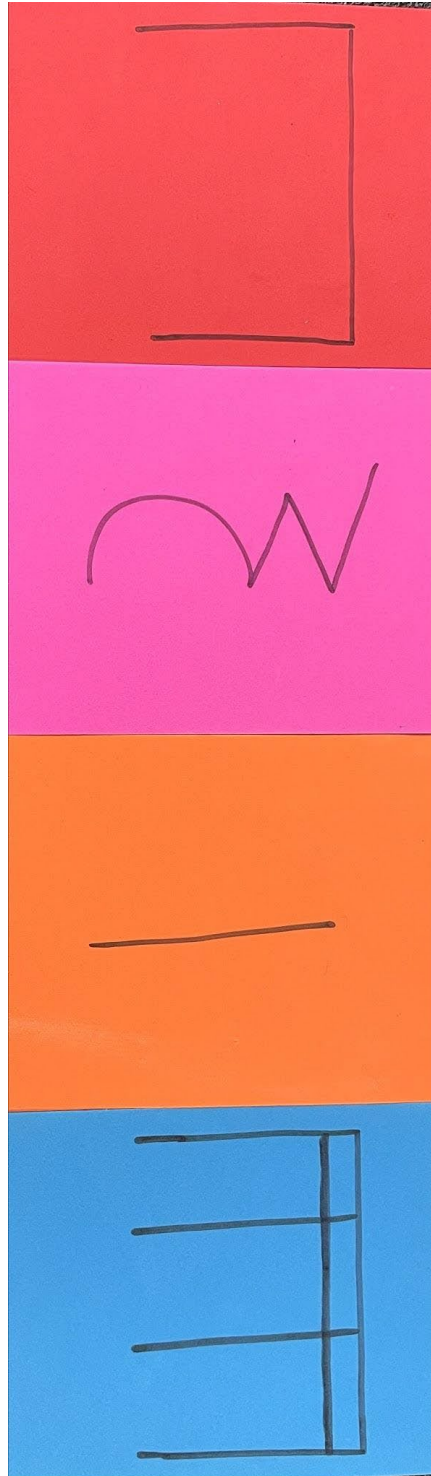


Figure 10. Wichita Falls, Texas.

Color in Art Class

Color can be used for adaptations in the art room to aid in student success when reading text in handouts, books or online with the use of color overlays for reading. Ask the student what their favorite color is and then have them read text with the colored overlay of that color. Offer other colors and ask which one works the best to see their words. Due to their own vision preferences, not color preferences,

they may be surprised to find that their favorite color does not work the best. Art educators can also print handouts on colored paper to reduce the contrast, but that could be expensive on a limited school budget. The overlays also can be used over computer screens, especially in classrooms where the educators may not be familiar with the ease of accessibility features on the classroom computers, and the classroom teachers may prefer to leave specific settings on their computers.

To help students who may struggle to read, organizing materials by colors in folders, boxes, bins, etc. assists student independence in gathering and putting away supplies. It does not take long to connect drawing materials to red, painting materials to blue, green for yarn, yellow for glues, etc. and words to support those colors can be added to build reading skills. Braille or other languages such as Spanish could be added as well as incorporating pictures to meet many students' needs. Many art educators use colors to indicate table/workspace areas for students, and have art materials such as pencils or brush handles in the same colors for organization.

Classroom management for all students can benefit from colors as well. The spotlight colors of red, yellow, and green are used by some educators to indicate volume levels in the classroom without having to speak loudly to the group. There are a number of strategies for how and where to use these in the classroom from handing out individual color circles to each table as the class progresses, or on a large space in the front of the class for all to see. Creating opportunities for students to take responsibility for their behaviors increases their ability to make good choices for successful school days.

Pacing in Music Class

Pacing is another teaching practice that Hammel and Hourigan recommend for working with students with disabilities. Teachers plan class instruction knowing some students follow all concepts, some concepts, or need more challenging concepts. Pacing affects speed of delivery, amount of material, and performance expectations (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).

Music adaptations for students include a myriad of ideas for students to perform and successfully be part of the class. Adapted music parts allow students to participate in an ensemble or music class. Parts can be rewritten for students to include rhythmic variations as well as tonal changes. Teachers can write a simpler melody using fewer notes and notes students can play. Likewise, parts can be adapted for students who need a challenge by increasing difficulty, adding melismas, increasing range, and/or adding challenging rhythms. Examples include: rewriting a part by adding a lower harmony to the melody (perhaps a student who cannot play over the break on clarinet); adding a bass line; adding a more complex part (percussion or taking a 3rd clarinet part and moving it up an octave for a different instrument).

As stated above in size, the amount of information on a music page in a music method book may be overwhelming. Similarly, the amount of information on music sheets may be overwhelming. Information such as title, composer/arranger, and music markings may distract students from the music itself (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017). A pacing adaptation is to remove extraneous material: give students the amount that will be covered in class and adding more when the student is ready; remove other voices and piano parts from octavos. Bowing is a challenge in orchestra. Students who have difficulty can pluck the string instead of bowing. Students can practice bowing separate from fingering on the neck of the string instrument and practice rhythm separate from melody.

Some students may be unable to attend music class for the entire period due to sensory challenges (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017). The music classroom can be loud with many sounds happening at once. All

students deserve a music education and partial participation is participating in music. Students who may not attend a full class can partially participate in concerts, performing what they learn. This can include performing one piece or parts of several pieces. If movement or choreography is involved, students can perform only the movements they can learn and not all the movements.

Pacing includes tempo. If students are challenged with the tempo, practice slower for all students to be successful. Tempo can be increased for students who are ready to play at tempo. When the tempo is increased, students who cannot play at tempo can air finger, play an adapted part, practice a technique (bowing), play/sing certain notes in the music that they are successful (a certain pitch or the first note in each measure), or tap the rhythm by tapping or chanting. Pacing includes preparing and reviewing concepts students perform in music class for the day or future lessons. This can be done as echoing rhythms and/or tonal patterns from the teacher, reading rhythmic and tonal ladders or flashcards, and creating warm ups that pertain to concepts in the music (rhythm, melodic, and harmonic).

Some students need longer wait time to respond or would benefit from being paired with a buddy in class (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017). Likewise, students who need differentiation due to giftedness may need higher order thinking skills. An actual example of a questions technique used in the classroom follows. After performing a section of music, a student playing the clarinet missed a note. They were asked to look at a measure and decide if the note was B or Bb. A student buddy could assist if needed. Meanwhile, a trombonist was asked to determine which note was out of tune in their section and fix the pitch. At the same time the teacher was working with another section. The teacher redirected the clarinetist and asked if they had determined the pitch. Responding correctly, the teacher directed the student to look up the fingering, again with the assistance of a buddy if needed. The teacher asked the trombonist what note was missed and if the pitch was corrected. Individualizing questions provided each student with appropriate challenges.

Pacing in Art Class

Displaying a class agenda including pictures for tasks can help students organize their time on task. This provides students with a scope of the schedule and a visual process for the assignment/project. Individual visual strategies can be implemented for students who work best with fewer parts to whole tasks. This visual strategy may minimize student anxiety by reducing steps of a multitask activity. Both image, color, and text can be used depending upon the student's capabilities. Another pacing strategy is to use multiple ways to demonstrate the expectations for the class period or the entire project. This can include samples that can be handled by students, modeling tasks, and then modeling again, and having students model the task for the entire class or at their table group.

Taking time to explore art materials before starting an art project is a successful strategy. For example, students may have used crayons multiple times, but perhaps have not used various techniques. Markers may be a familiar art tool, but using the tip, the side and gently dotting may be skills for review. Cutting fabric or other materials such as tissue paper can be challenging for students. Practicing on scraps and sharing techniques can build skill and confidence before tackling a new project. Art educators should not take for granted that students have developed skills in all art materials since many students frequently change schools during the academic year. Educators should reintroduce materials to students when introducing new projects. Providing student opportunities to practice simple tasks such as writing their name on scrap paper with the drawing material of the project reduces anxiety when approaching new projects. Encourage students to buddy with peers with learning differences to share personal art material techniques.

When planning how students with learner differences will complete a project, determine which tasks are relevant and how to break concepts into smaller pieces to avoid or limit student frustration. Art making should be about the process of practicing skills. Students need to process repetitive motions that are independent, abstract, and enjoyable. Time should be provided to joyfully reflect on the art created. For instance, if an art activity is a collage of various materials and the student struggles to cut materials, precut a variety of materials regarding color, texture, and size and request that the student focus on making choices for materials and placement. The task and value of cutting as part of the task is minimized to enhance the skills of the student. Students may cut their own materials when a project is more conducive to their abilities. Some students struggle with certain tasks in a project and become frustrated as the other students work at a faster pace and are differently skilled. The result is that students with learner differences are unable to work at a reasonable pace, fall behind on tasks, and possibly lose desire to complete the artwork. The art educator should look at the tasks of the art project and determine what tasks are critical to the student's demonstration of creativity, skill, craftsmanship, etc. and which tasks can be done by others. There will always be projects for other skills.

Modality: Visual, Aural, and Kinesthetic

Students who are neurotypical often learn through any modality, whether visual, aural, or kinesthetic. However, students with learning differences often learn best through one learning modality (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017). In a classroom it is important to present material in all three modalities, visually, aurally, and kinesthetically to ensure all students receive information in a manner they can learn.

Visual Modality in Music Class

Music is an aural art, but reading music is visual. Some students have difficulty distinguishing note heads on a staff and deciding if they are in a space or on a line. Students benefit from seeing rhythms, new notes, harmonies, and musical concepts presented on a white board or overhead projector. This allows students to see the content isolated from the music in a larger format than on sheet music. Tracking beats on the white board/overhead projector assists student understanding of how beats are divided into each measure, and it assists with horizontal eye tracking.

[Lime Lighter, from Dancing Dots](#) is a tablet with a program that allows music to be scanned or entered manually. The tablet can be mounted to a music stand or placed on a piano music desk. As notes are entered, a background color can be selected, and color can be added to noteheads for labelling pitches. Markings or performance notes can be hand drawn into the score. The student can enlarge the music up to ten times the original size. Lime Lighter is a visual, color, and size adaptation for students with low vision. An automatic scrolling option is available.

Visual Modality in Art Class

The more that art lessons and art tasks integrate these modalities into the processes of the art class, the better equipped the students are for their own unique art responses. These responses can be artist statements, art pieces, or critiques. The artmaking process is imbued naturally with all these through the variety of materials that students can use and what artistry is created. And, in many instances, the areas of visual, aural, and kinesthetic cannot be considered in isolation, but they overlap and intertwine at the same time, as music educators would say, in harmony.

Art educators use visuals to excite student enthusiasm, help students visualize concepts, explain processes, and offer multiple solutions to art tasks. A significant number of students rely primarily on

what they see to know what to do. The aural part, listening to the explanations and directions, can be challenging for students who have auditory differences and attention or behavioral concerns as these students may “tune out” the art educator and want to get started with the materials. Engaging these students relies on the art educator to use various modalities at the same time to reach all students in their best learner modality. Art educators can have multiple stages of the final product to show as they explain, building enthusiasm for the final piece. As the art educator is talking about the task, they can hand out various materials for students to manipulate while being aurally focused. Possibly a mini video by their peers can increase the visual AND the listening. That would certainly get some attention.

It should be stated that for some students, the art room can be visually overstimulating. Art educators love to create what psychologists Pedro Rodrigues and Josefa Pandeirada (2018) identify as sensory rich rooms with color and texture and visuals on the ceiling, floor, walls, and door to stimulate student creativity. Barrett et. al, (2015) wrote, “As a rule of thumb, 20 to 50 percent of the available wall space should be kept clear”. Some art educators fill all possible wall space in their classroom without realizing this visually overstimulates students with learner differences.

Visuals may not be easily observed by all students from the front of the classroom. If students are using communication devices such as an iPad, cell phone, or computer, they can bring the images closer to themselves by using these tools. Individually laminated art images can be made for each worktable, so the students can see the images as close as needed and can refer to them on their table as they work. Some visuals can be enhanced for students with sensory challenges who would gain more information from “feeling” an image. Art educators can use hot glue or Elmer’s Glue All™ to “draw” onto the significant lines of the image to not only support students with limited vision, but also for students who need more sensory input and thus the raised lines of the glue on the image (see Figure 11). For other students, it might be a novel way to experience a visual image in a new way.



Figure 11. Marion, Wisconsin.

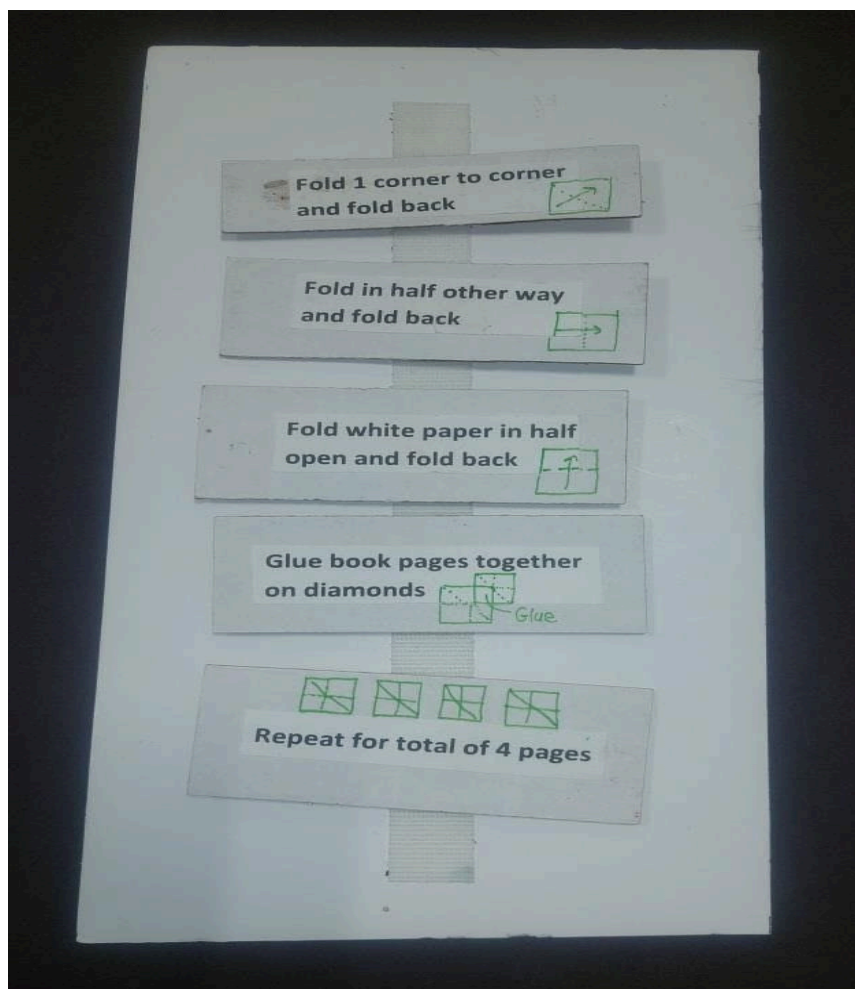


Figure 12. Marion, Wisconsin.

Figure 12 is a visual strategy designed for a student who is folding papers to create pages for a book. By providing specific steps of the process one direction at a time, the student can minimize their anxiety about forgetting a step or remembering the steps for multiple pages. The steps are Velcro-ed to a board, and when the step is completed, it can be removed and put on another board to do additional pages, or just taken off as finished. This step-by-step visual process can be used with any multi-step activity, including the agenda for the entire class period.

Another strategy that can be effective for students with visual challenges is to use different colors of paper for the students to create their images. For some students, the high contrast of white background with colors is fatiguing, and the students may appear bored, disinterested, or may stop working when the effect is too much. Art educators need to be aware of student vision issues, and when possible, have the students work in reverse, for example, darker paper and lighter drawing or painting materials. Black of course is the most dark, but other dark colors can work as well. Handouts for writing artist statements, journals or critiques from the art educator can be printed on colored paper since it is easier for all students to read.

Aural Modality in Music Class

Music is an aural activity for listeners. Learning to read music is often emphasized in music classes. If a student learns aurally as their primary or only learning modality, adaptations allowing students to participate in ensembles with a de-emphasis on visual reading is important. This allows students with vision challenges to participate. Often choral music is performed without music. In instrumental ensembles, learning music should not be solely based on visual reading.

Aural activities can be used in class to teach students to hear what the music sounds like. For example, using rhythmic echoing, tonal echoing, and teaching songs using chording methods (singing parts and layering voices) can be implemented.

Aural Modality in Art Class

The aural modality in art can at times be considered the background music that is played while students are working. This work will not describe any strategies for choosing the specific music that will be played in the art classroom when there are many musical tastes to consider. Another aspect of the aural modality is the need for some students for quiet or white noise in a loud and excitingly active classroom. Students with aural sensitivity may need support via headphones that they bring to control their auditory levels for comfort and calmness. Art educators need to be informed whether any of the students have sound sensitivity and whether the student can bring their own headphones or earbuds to the art room, or if there can be an extra pair available to stay in the art room for the student.

Classroom time management can be monitored with sound or visuals. The [TimeTimer™](#) is a device that is similar to a clock but shows the time remaining for a task or for the entire class period (see Figure 13). Many classrooms use them to help students self-regulate during tasks, especially as they approach cleanup and transition to the next task or room. The Time Timer can have an auditory beeping sound for when students are not watching the timer. It can sometimes work better than an educator raising their voices over students.



Figure 13. Time Timer (Source: Time Timer, 2021)

Kinesthetic Modality in Music Class

The kinesthetic modality allows students to learn through movement and/or touching materials. In music, students can learn to read staff notation using felt staves with puffy paint used for the staff lines. Round plastic discs can be used as noteheads. Students learn notes on the staff and how note heads are either in a space or on a line. The puffy paint provides texture to feel the lines (see Figure 14).

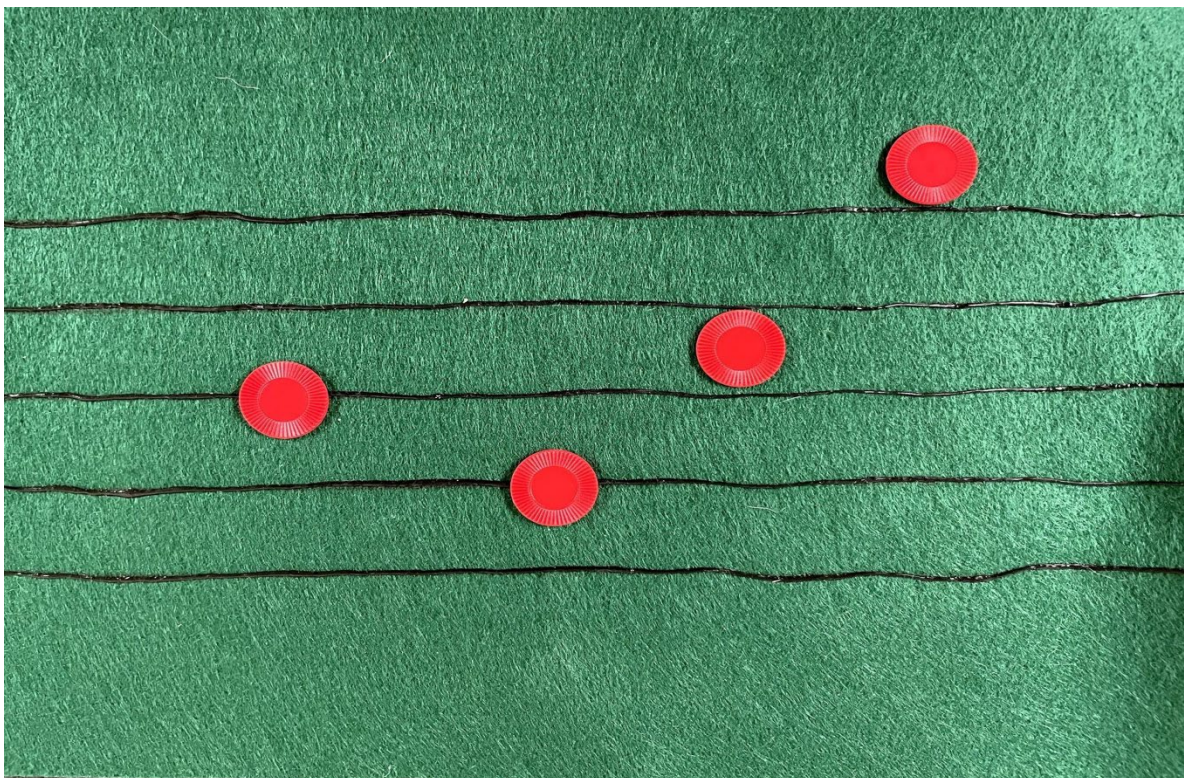


Figure 14. Wichita Falls, Texas.

Another kinesthetic way to associate notes on a line or in a space is to add motions. Students say 'on a line' with hands flat at their temples (see Figure 15). This represents the staff line through the note head. Then students say 'in a space' with one hand flat under the chin and the other hand flat on top of the head (see Figure 16). This represents the note head in the space between staff lines. Students speaking 'on a line' and 'in a space' with the corresponding motion reinforces the concept where note heads appear on a music staff.



Figure 15. Wichita Falls, Texas.



Figure 16. Wichita Falls, Texas

Moving is not a regular occurrence in an ensemble rehearsal with exception to playing instruments and/or singing. To assist students with feeling rhythm, students can keep beat with one hand and beat division with the other hand. The motion can be on thighs, chest, on a desk, or another place on the body. When students maintain beat and beat division during rhythm and tonal echoes, reading rhythm cards, reading music without an instrument, and singing, they have a kinesthetic reference for feeling the beat and beat division. Some students are unable to keep both beat and beat division at the same time. When this happens, students can focus on either beat or beat division. After students maintain beat, they can switch to practicing only beat division. Some students find it easier to step the beat while patting the beat division on the palm of one hand with two fingers of the other hand. This is another way to feel the beat and beat division. Music educators can suggest different movements so students may find what works best for themselves.

When learning a piece of music, either choral or instrumental, students can sing solfege while showing the Curwen Glover hand signs. This allows students to have a kinesthetic reminder of pitches as they sing. The result is more in tune singing.

Student orchestra students often have tape on the neck of their instrument to learn finger placement for certain notes. Likewise, students who play the recorder may need texture on the tone holes to feel a better grip. Puffy paint or paper hole reinforcers can be placed on the tone holes. Figures 7 and 8 show a recorder with color coded puffy paint.

[Dancing Dots](#) is a company that offers resources on their webpage to assist music educators in converting music to Braille. This is effective for students with visual challenges to learn reading music.

Kinesthetic Modality in Art Class

Artmaking provides kinesthetic experiences for students in all grades. From painting on hands, pressing cold and gooshy clay, feeling rough and smelly burlap, to crayon rubbings over leaves, artmaking is potentially exciting and overwhelming. If the tools themselves feel uncomfortable, the student could use a sponge hand grip or other more preferred texture for pencils and markers. Students with tactile challenges may struggle touching art materials, so the art educator might consider putting the materials in a clear plastic bag for the student to manipulate until they are ready to touch it without the plastic bag (see Figure 17).



Figure 17. Marion, Wisconsin.

Some students learn through taste. This results in students wanting to taste art materials before using them. Educators need to plan accordingly for safety, ensuring art materials are nontoxic. Some students are sensitive to smells, and many art materials have unpleasant odors. This may result in some students being unable to attend class in the art room. When students know in advance an odor may be present, the student will be prepared, adjust their behavior, and possibly attend class.

Conclusion

Collaboration between music and visual arts educators can be effective in creating positive experiences for students with learner differences. Many tasks in art and music require interaction with materials that might need adaptations. This can include hand grips for smaller tools, like drum sticks or markers, or inclusion of scissors or a rollout piano. Collaboration with special educators is encouraged to glean new perspectives into potential adaptations. When music and visual art educators work together and with other stakeholders in their school, all educators develop professionally and students with learning differences succeed in the arts.

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State of Inclusion: Illinois visual art teacher's preparedness, support, and pedagogical practices for working with students with disabilities

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Abstract:

This research is based on the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) commissioned study, *The State of Special Education Professional Report* (Fowler et al., 2019). In the spring of 2020, a modified survey instrument was digitally sent to survey to art teachers in Illinois.² The research used a descriptive survey design and was part of a more extensive study examining inclusive approaches related to disability, curriculum, and pedagogy in prek-12 visual art and design classrooms. This research examines Illinois art teacher's perceptions of preparedness, support, and pedagogy practice leading to successful inclusion of students with disabilities in visual arts classrooms. Information from this survey is compared to results from the CEC study to develop a portrait of the strengths and needs for art teachers to successfully support students with disabilities.

². An Institutional Review Board approved this survey, and all participants consented prior to participation

State of Inclusion: Illinois visual art teacher's preparedness, support, and pedagogical practices for working with students with disabilities

Overview

Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 guaranteed a free and appropriate education to every child with a disability. Since that time, increasing numbers of children with disabilities have attended public schools (Guay, 1994) and at the same time schools have slowly moved toward inclusion as the model of the least restrictive environment. One of the first places in which students with disabilities are often placed for inclusive environments is the art room (Gerber & Guay, 2006). In 1994, Blandy identified key factors that would help prepare pre-service art teachers to work with students with disabilities. In that same year, Guay (1994) published the first study that examined art teachers' preparedness to work with students with disabilities. In the subsequent years, researchers continued to write about and advocate for the needs of students with disabilities in the art room (Keifer-Boyd & Kraft, 2003; Loesl, 1999; Nyman & Jenkins, 1999; Ware, 2011, Wexler, 2005). Yet, it was not until 2001 that the National Art Education Association established the Special Needs in Arts Education Issues Group (SNAE) and in 2015 that the Council for Exceptional Children established the Division of Visual and Performing Arts Education (DARTS) (Gerber & Dorff, 2019).

Two empirical surveys were conducted that provide insight from the perspective of art teachers. Guay (1994) surveyed 212 randomly selected first year teachers who were members of the National Art Education Association. This survey indicated that most teachers felt unprepared to teach inclusive classes and students with disabilities, with 58% of teachers reporting having taken at least one course focused on special education. Guay (1994) found that teachers were inadequately prepared to teach students with disabilities. Cramer et al. (2015) specifically examined art teachers' preparedness for teaching students with physical, visual, severe, and multiple disabilities (PVSMD). Cramer et al. found

that art teachers felt minimally prepared regarding knowledge of student characteristics and needs along with the teaching and assessment strategies for working with students with PVSMD. At the same time, Cramer et al. argued that the findings from their research indicated that art teachers can meet the needs of diverse students through increasing access to content and classrooms.

Building on the history of surveys in art that examine issues of teacher preparation and support this research examines the following questions:

- What preparation and support are in place for art teachers to have successful inclusion for students with disabilities?
- In what ways do art teachers make their classrooms, pedagogy, and curriculum inclusive for students with disabilities?

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive survey design and was part of a more extensive study examining inclusive approaches related to disability, curriculum, and pedagogy in prek-12 visual art and design classrooms. In particular, this article is attentive to the questions that help understand art teachers' preparedness, support, and pedagogical practices for working with students with disabilities. In 2019, the Council for Exceptional Children's commissioned study, *The State of Special Education Professional Report*, was developed to assess special educators' use of identified best practices for working with diverse learners (Fowler et al., 2019). This report was based on factors that the CEC Pioneers Division and a design team consisting of CEC members identified as important for improving outcomes for students with disabilities as well as their families and the professionals who serve them (Fowler et al., 2019).

For this survey, participants were initially asked a series of demographic questions. In the second section of the survey, five categories of questions were developed based on the report by Fowler

et al.: 1) participants' use of IEPs to guide instruction; 2) participants' sense of competency in assessment, instruction, and classroom management; 3) participants' perception of factors that influence a sense of belonging for students with disabilities; 4) participants' views about support for inclusion; and 5) participants' perceptions of the most important factors for student success. The survey consisted of 33-35 questions, with two added questions based on the respondents' answers. The majority of the questions were multiple choice and Likert scales. Four questions consisted of short responses; however, none of those questions are included in this analysis. This survey aims to explore how art teachers make their classrooms, pedagogy, and curriculum inclusive for students with disabilities. In addition, the survey questions are designed to elicit information regarding the preparation and supports in place for art teachers to have successful inclusion for students with disabilities.

In the spring of 2020, a pilot version of the survey was created and disseminated to five art teachers for feedback. Following adjustments, a digital survey was sent to art teachers in Illinois.³ The research consists of a multi-stage process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), where initially, the survey was sent via email to 876 visual art and design teachers. It was later distributed via social media platforms, with 163 persons responding to the survey. Twelve of those responses were from social media or shared links. The response rate for emails was 17.2%. Out of the responses, 153 participants identified as teaching visual art or design to preK-12 grade students in a school setting in Illinois, therefore $n=153$. The data reported in this article were analyzed using a count method and then compared to responses on the CEC survey. Often the responses were converted to percentages and rounded to the nearest percent⁴ so the data from this survey could be compared to the data from the CEC survey.

Participants⁵

³ An Institutional Review Board approved this survey, and all participants consented prior to participation.

⁴ In some tables, the percentage may not add to 100% because of rounding.

⁵ The information in this section was previously published (Gross, 2021).

The respondents first answered a series of questions on descriptive demographics. Participants self-identified the location of their school as large urban for 18.5% of respondents, small urban for 11.25%, suburban for 52.98%, and rural for 17.22%. Participants' schools were 87.42% public, 9.27% private, 1.99% selective enrollment public, and 1.32% charter. Participants were allowed to select all grade levels they taught, and there was a fairly even distribution of grade levels taught with a slight skew towards elementary. The respondents identified their highest level of education as 21.3% with a bachelor's, 36.42% with a master's, 31.13% with a master's +30, and 1.32% with a doctorate.

Illinois Visual Art Teacher Preparation

The state of Illinois currently has 25 institutions⁶ that offer programs that lead to certification in pk-12 visual arts education (IEPP, 2021). Sixteen of the programs had 10 or fewer pre-service students recommended for certification between 2015-2019 (IEPP, 2021). Nine of the programs had 12 to 76 students recommended for certification between 2015-2019 (IEPP, 2021). Some art teacher preparation programs may not be included in this data if the program is recently approved or recently discontinued (ISBE, 2020). Illinois requires all teacher preparation programs to have coursework that covers "methods of instruction of the exceptional child in cross-categorical special education" (Requirements for the Professional Educator License, 2021, sec a2Ai). Out of the 25 currently enrolling institutions listed on Illinois Educator Preparation Profile (IEPP), 23 programs have at least one required course that references disability, special education, exceptional needs, or exceptional children as part of the title. Three programs require two courses related to disability and/or special education. In addition, many of the institutions offer courses on issues of diversity and inclusion that often include disability as one of the topics.

Art teacher respondents were asked to report on their preparedness to work with students with disabilities. The 146 participants responded as follows: 23% not prepared, 40% somewhat, 25%

⁶ The IPP website lists 25 institutions, but the IEPP website does not include programs newer than 2015.

moderately, 10% very well prepared, 3% extremely well prepared. When special education teachers were asked to identify how well-prepared they were to teach students with exceptionalities, 69% of special education teachers identified as well prepared (Fowler et al., 2019). However, Fowler et al. identified only 39% of beginning special educators as well prepared. When asked about general education teachers (which would include art teachers), only 8% of the special educators identified as well prepared (Fowler et al., 2019).

Approximately 36% of art teachers identified as moderately or well prepared to teach students with disabilities. In comparison to special education teachers, art teachers felt approximately the same level of preparedness at the beginning of their careers. However, the results also suggest that art teachers in Illinois feel significantly more prepared to teach students with disabilities than special education teachers perceive them to be. This is problematic as the model of inclusion relies on art teachers' preparedness to work with students with disabilities and the buy-in of IEP team members that students with disabilities will be successful in an inclusive arts classroom.

Planning and Support for Successful Inclusion

Teachers were asked to identify what three factors were most important for the successful teaching of students with disabilities in visual art classrooms (Figure 1). Art teachers identified the following as most important: smaller class size (115), knowledgeable para-educators (82), adequate resources to meet Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements (78), access to related service personnel (68), and teachers' professional development (39). This question was identical to the question asked of special education teachers. Art teachers ranked the three items of most importance as 1) smaller class sizes, 2) knowledgeable para-educators, and 3) adequate resources. All three items ranked in the top four of items as most important by special education teachers. Special education teachers ranked 1) adequate resources as most important, 2) smaller class sizes, 3) administrators who support the IEP process, and 4) knowledgeable para-educators. The difference in these rankings may be due to

several factors, but mainly that art teachers are more likely than special education teachers to have large class sizes. However, the consistency in identifying the critical factors for student success between the two teacher groups suggests these are common variables and the administration should support teachers and students through these measures when advocating for successful inclusion.

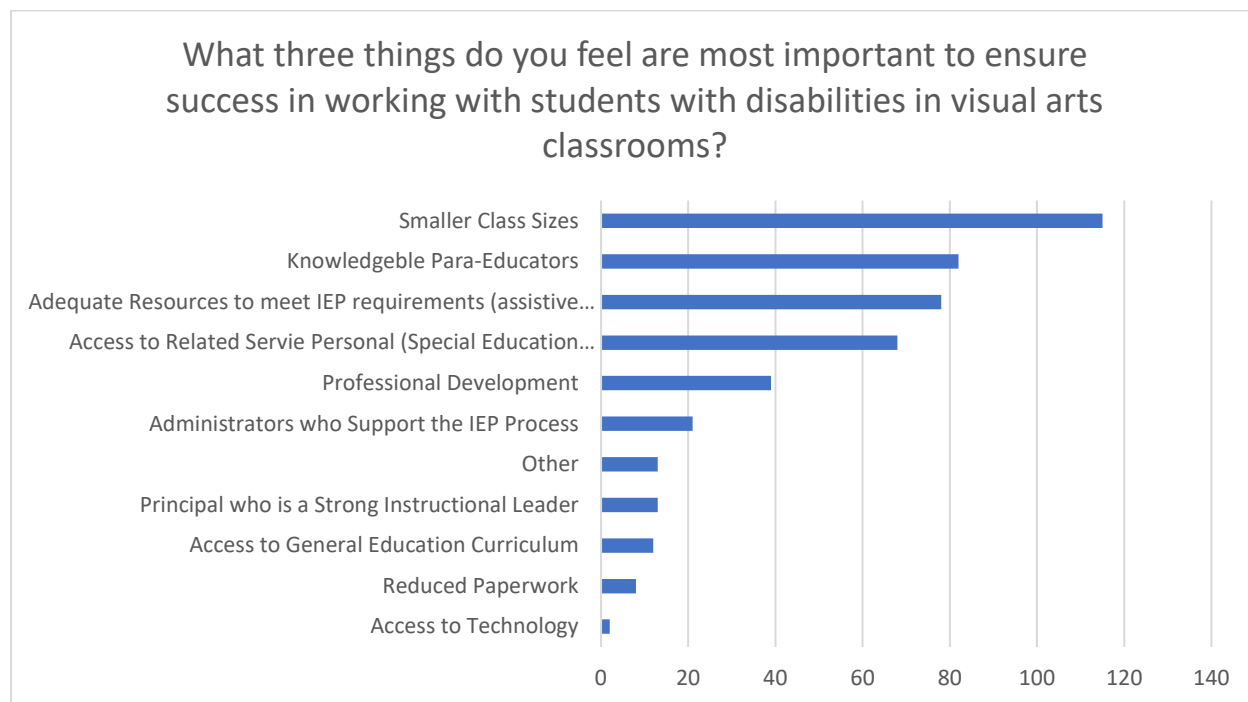


Figure 1. What three things do you feel are most important to ensure success in working with students with disabilities in visual arts classrooms?

Creating conditions for successful inclusion starts with sufficient time for art educators to plan and prepare for lessons. When asked about time to plan lessons, 56% of art teacher respondents felt they had no or insufficient time to plan their lessons (Figure 2) while 43% identified having sufficient time to plan lessons. For teachers, this indicates that 23% more art teachers than special education teachers felt they had sufficient time to plan lessons (Fowler et al., 2019). In terms of identified time to plan with teaching partners, art educators (77%) and special educators (86%) both similarly identified no time or insufficient (Fowler et al., 2019). This means that neither art teachers nor special education teachers are provided sufficient time to work collaboratively and learn from peers.

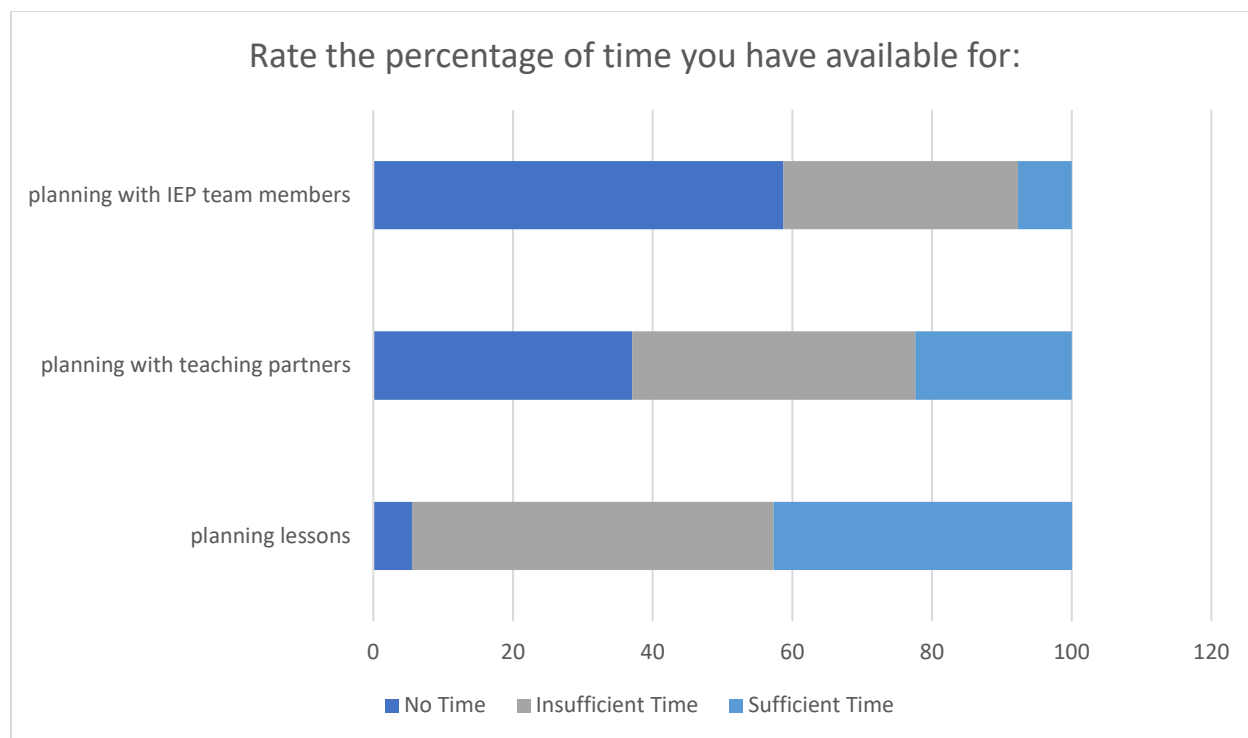


Figure 2. Rate the percentage of time for planning.

Most concerning was the category of “planning with IEP team members,” which was almost identical for art education teachers and special education teachers in that 92% of art teachers indicated no or insufficient time to plan with IEP team members, similar to the 89% of special education teachers (Fowler et al., 2019). Regardless of teachers’ preparedness when they enter the profession, continuing support, and confidence in implementing various teaching and classroom management strategies, if teachers do not have sufficient time to plan, especially with IEP team members who can work together to collaborate supportive strategies for students with disabilities, inclusion will be challenging.

IEPs are considered the foundational document to provide support for students with disabilities in pre-k-12 settings. IEPs may contain academic, social, and behavioral goals applicable to an art room setting. In addition, IEPs provide important information on strengths and areas for accommodations. More than half of the art teachers reported referring to the IEP on a frequent basis and less than five percent reported never looking at an IEP (Figure 3). Overall, it appears that art teachers reference IEPs less often than special educators and there may be a variety of reasons for this, including the number of

students art teachers see and the frequency with which they see students. Further research with a larger sample size could determine trends within subgroups; perhaps art teachers in elementary school are referring to IEPs less because they see students less often than art teachers in high school settings.

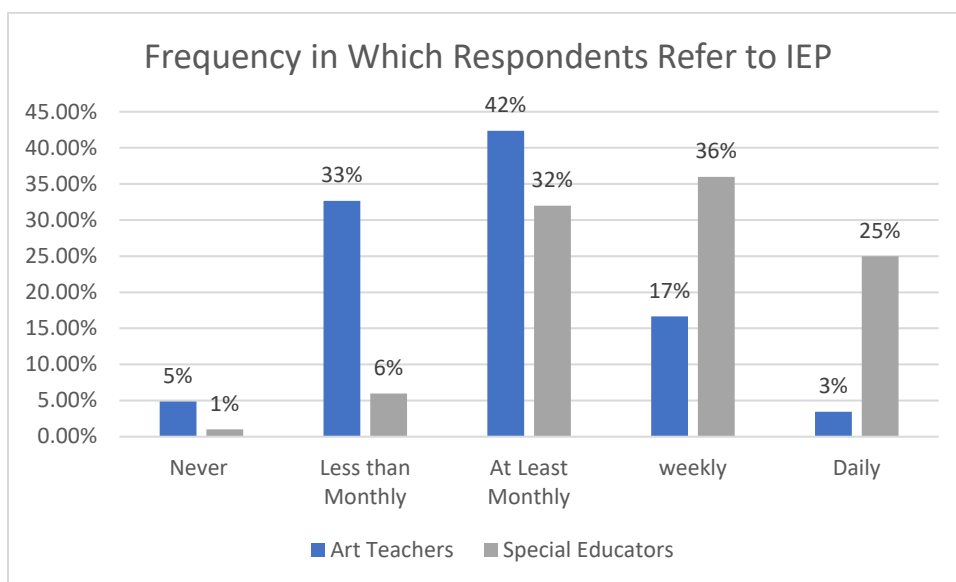


Figure 3. Frequency in Which Respondents Refer to IEP results compared to Fowler et al. (2019).

Modifying the curriculum and pedagogy through differentiation, accommodations, and/or addressing multiple modalities is essential for students with differing learning needs to access content. More than half (54%) of art teachers describe modifications occurring either most of the time or always. This is less than the over 70% of special educators who reported modifications occurring most of the time or always (Fowler et al., 2019). Fowler et al. found through a bivariate analysis that special educators reported a significant difference in the frequency of times they referred to the IEP and modified the curriculum based on the setting. Special education teachers who were in general education settings referred to the IEP and modified the curriculum less often than instructors in self-contained classrooms (Fowler et al., 2019). However, the data on percentages of special education teachers who modified the curriculum in general education settings were unpublished, so a comparison cannot be made in this analysis.

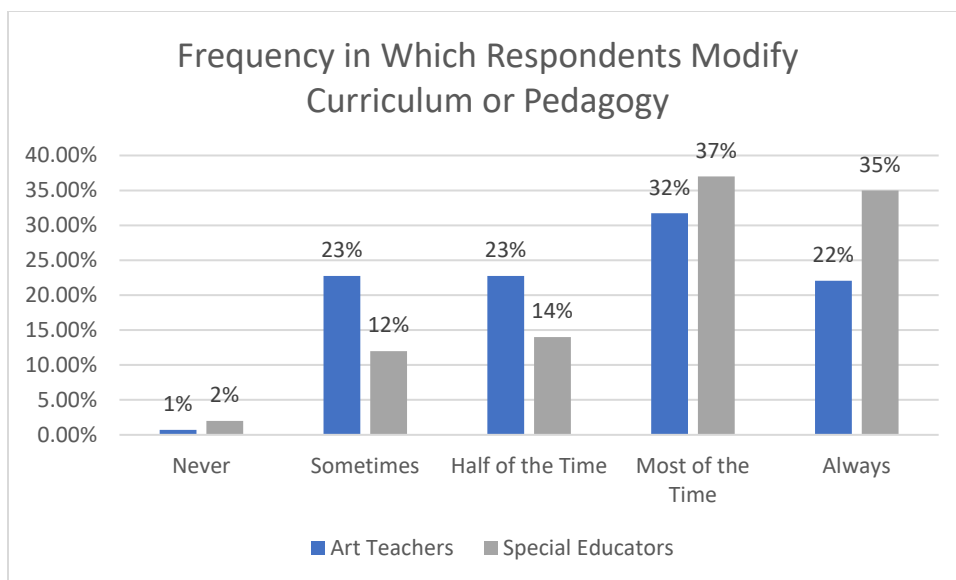


Figure 4. Frequency in Which Respondents Modify Curriculum results compared to Fowler et al. (2019).

Pedagogical Strategies for Successful Inclusion

As discussed by Fowler et al. (2019), there are various collaborative teaching models available that can support students. These models are essential for inclusion in general education settings (Fowler et al.), with 62% of special educators using inclusion a lot or a great deal (Fowler et al., 2019). For art educators, the most common form of collaborative teaching model is the idea of inclusion, with 72% using it a lot or a great deal. Given the previous information provided regarding planning time, and especially planning time with IEP team members, I would argue that this model of teaching may be seen as collaborative for a special educator. However, it is not necessarily collaborative for the art educator. Co-teaching is a collaborative model used less frequently by both art and special education teachers. Only 13% of art educators are using a co-teaching model often, while 29% of special education teachers identify co-teaching as a strategy often used (Fowler et al., 2019).

Classroom management and creating classroom environments that support learners in inclusive settings are key for successful inclusion. Fowler et al. (2019) asked special educators to identify their competency level in using disciplinary strategies. Special education teachers seemed confident in their

abilities, with two-thirds rating themselves as highly competent to provide students with safe breaks from instruction, use of time-out, and implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and behavioral support strategies. Only half of the respondents noted they were very or extremely competent in culturally responsive approaches (53%) or functional behavior assessments. Special educator respondents were given the option of identifying an alternative strategy, and 53 identified the use of restorative practices or restorative justice (Fowler et al.).

In this survey, art teachers were asked to describe their feeling of competence using the organizational and classroom management strategies for students with disabilities in visual art and design using a rating scale of 1 (not competent) to 5 (extremely confident). Similar to the Fowler et al. (2019) survey, respondents were offered the option of selecting “I do not use.” Because so many special educators identified the use of restorative justice, this was added as an option for art teachers. Overall, the art teachers exhibited less confidence in their ability to use these same strategies (Figure 5). The percentage of art teachers very (4) or extremely (5) confident for each of the following strategies: culturally responsive teaching (43.9%), use of quiet space 59.2%, restorative justice (38.26%), PBIS (46.34%), and Functional Behavioral Assessments at 33%. The only strategy in which at least two-third of art teachers felt very or extremely competent (suggesting high competency) is behavior supports (65.6%).

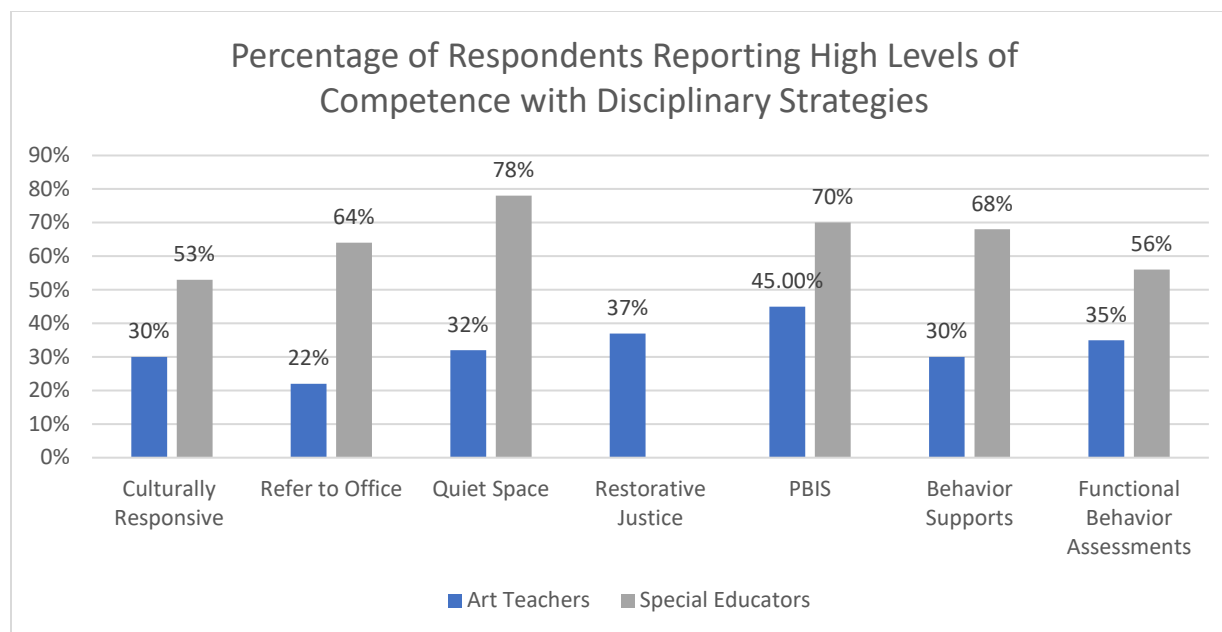


Figure 5. Percentage of Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence with Disciplinary Strategies results compared to Fowler et al. (2019).

Assessment strategies are key when teaching, as assessment strategies allow teachers to formatively assess students' knowledge, adjust lessons as necessary, monitor progress, and summatively assess students' mastery of learning objectives. Art teachers rated themselves as very or extremely competent in observational data at 70% and portfolios at 56%. In comparison, to areas where special education teachers rated themselves highly, art teachers rated themselves much lower in the areas of monitoring IEP goals, which was 81% for special education teachers and 39% for art educators, using progress monitoring at 75% for special educators and 47% for art educators, and using formal assessments, which were 74% for special educators and 29% for art teachers.

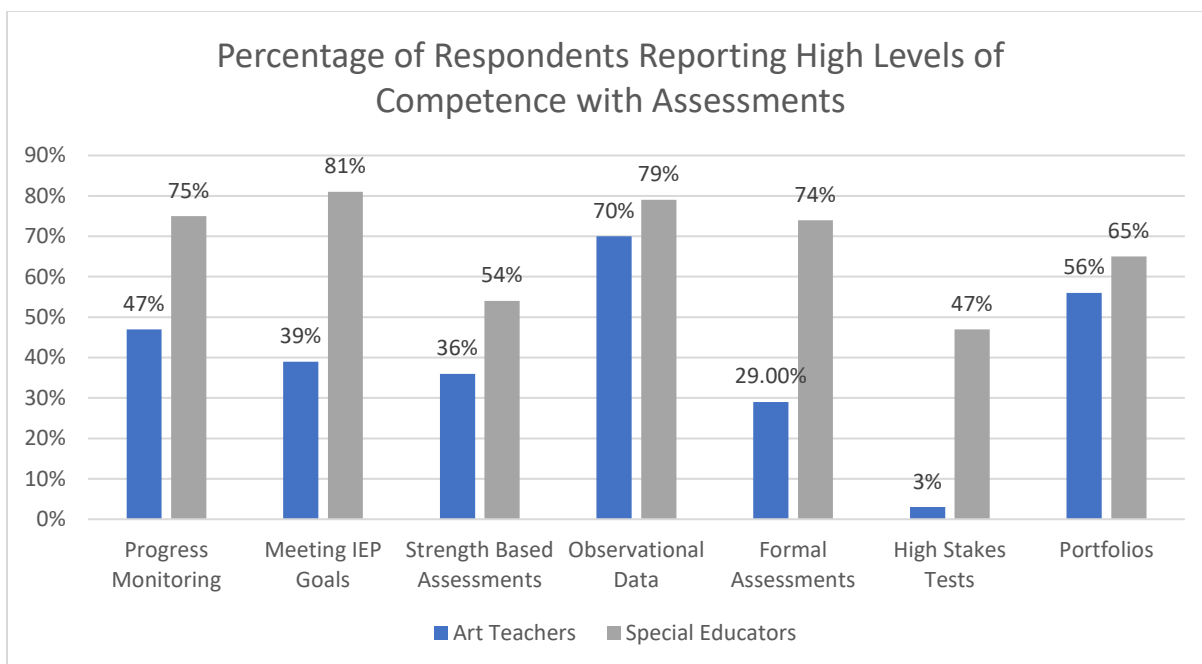


Figure 6. Percentage of Respondents Reporting High Levels of Competence with Assessment Strategies results compared to Fowler et al. (2019).

Art teachers and special educators both rated themselves lower in strength-based assessments, with 54% of special educators feeling very or extremely confident and 36% of art teachers feeling similarly. The greatest area of contrast was the rating of confidence in high stakes testing, where only 3% of art teachers identified as extremely or very confident compared to 47% of special educators. Although almost 38% of art teachers noted they do not use high-stakes testing. In every area, art teachers rated themselves lower than special educators in the use of various forms of assessment. This may be due to many elementary art teachers having fewer district requirements for assessment than elementary special educators. However, this unease with using assessment represents a problem for supporting students with disabilities and potentially a greater issue for the field.

Conclusions

As Fowler et al. (2019) point out policies such as class sizes, planning time, collaboration, and resources are necessary to include students with disabilities in prek-12 classrooms effectively. This

survey indicates that many art teachers and special educators have similar concerns regarding what they deem important for student success. The top three factors for art teachers include

- 1) smaller class sizes
- 2) knowledgeable para-educators
- 3) adequate resources to meet IEP requirements

Regarding planning time, art teachers indicate adequate time to plan lessons, but a lack of time to plan with teaching partners or IEP team members. Much of this was consistent with the percentages reported by special educators, but it suggests that many types of teachers are experiencing a lack of time or opportunities to collaboratively plan.

In this survey approximately 38% of art teachers felt moderately, well, or extremely prepared to work with students with disabilities. This indicates that in the last 25 years art teachers from three surveys continue to express that they feel underprepared to support diverse learners and students with disabilities with 70% (Guay, 1994), 63.2 % (Cramer et al., 2015), and 63% in this survey in 2020.

However, art educators perceive themselves to be more well prepared to work with students with disabilities than special educators perceive general education teachers. Both art educators and special educators agree that paraprofessionals are under-prepared to support students with disabilities.

Respondents painted a mixed picture in terms of their ability to modify curriculum and enact best practices for supporting students with disabilities in inclusive settings. In this study, over half of the respondents refer to IEPs at least monthly and modify curriculum at least half of the time. Art teachers consistently reported a lower level of confidence in using disciplinary and assessment strategies than special educators. For art educators, the lack of comfort in research-based disciplinary strategies could suggest a potential challenge for successfully, including students with challenging behaviors in the art room. Art educators seem most comfortable with using qualitative forms of assessments such as observational data, portfolios, and progress monitoring.

Overall, these survey data suggest that art educators continue to feel underprepared to support students with disabilities in visual arts classrooms. Although researchers have found that two or more courses on the topic of disability/exceptionalities increases comfort level and preparedness, the State of Illinois does not require two courses, and the majority of art education teacher preparation programs only require one course, which does not need to be art specific. Art teacher unease with using proven disciplinary and assessment strategies suggest that further support is necessary to successfully include students with disabilities in visual arts classrooms.

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Endnote:

I want to acknowledge the challenges in language, particularly in language around disabled persons, and the difference between a special education and a disability studies approach. Many disability studies scholars and disabled people prefer to use identity first language. However, within schools, the use of person-first language is considered the appropriate model. When working with disabled people, I always let the person lead in how they wish to be identified. However, for the sake of this research, which is intended to be distributed to prek-12 schools and does not identify specific individuals, person-first language was used.

Poverty, Special Education, and Access to the Arts

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ABSTRACT

This article will focus directly on the relationship between poverty and access to arts education (music, drama, theatre, dance, and visual art) opportunities for students who have with disabilities. Specifically, those students who are also below the poverty line. The aim is to focus on the policies, community structures, and recent events (e.g. COVID-19) that contribute to this issue. In addition, this article will examine success stories as a model for future implementation in K-12 school as well as community partnerships to assist with improving the current climate.

Key words: Poverty, Disability, Arts, Music, Theatre, Dance

Poverty, Special Education, and Access to the Arts

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Introduction

One in five school-aged children live below the poverty line in the United States. This includes over 10-million students and represents more than 21% of the total U.S. public school student population (Layton, 2015). In addition, during the 2019-2020 academic year 7.3 million students received special education services. This represents 14% of the total student population (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). It has been long documented that students who are faced with learning challenges are often excluded from equal access to arts education (Malley and Silverstein, 2014). Research also suggests children who are faced with poverty or who live in school districts that are financially challenged often face limited or no arts education (Wexler, 2014).

To examine the landscape of overall availability of an arts education nationwide, here are the basic statistics. Of our 50 states, only 29 regard arts education as a core subject, only 20 states require arts education for graduation and only 22 provide state funding for the arts (National Center for Education Statistic, 2018). There has been a steady decline in dance and theatre instruction requiring families who are interested to seek private instruction (Crockett and Blakeslee, 2018). The frequency of instruction during the school day has also declined over recent decades.

An arts education is essential to the development of the whole child (See, 2016). What are the economic and learning barriers that cause access challenges for these two distinct groups? How can local, state, and federal policies help bridge the gap and strengthen access for those who are disadvantaged? The focus of this white paper is to advocate for a change in policy and federal funding to

provide equal access to an arts education for all students, especially those who are faced with economic and learning challenges.

Poverty and Access to an Arts Education

Research has shown for decades that students who live in poverty often have an unequal access to quality education. This includes an education in the arts (Wexler, 2014). This can be as small as the limited program offerings within a city to larger, more systemic problems related to poverty such as housing, affordable lunch, Head Start programming, and abuse prevention, which are all contributing factors (Edelman & Jones, 2004). Considering the challenges mentioned above, it is difficult to define a space for arts education. For example, in music education Bates (2016) states:

The potential roles of music educators, on the other hand, with specializations in musicking and teaching, may not be quite so obvious. Music does matter and musical experiences can serve to meet important social and psychological needs, but music is not a life-sustaining human need on par with food, safety, clean water, vaccines, political empowerment, and basic literacy. (p. 2)

However, there are other critical roles that the arts play when part of the education of a child who is challenged by poverty.

Before we define the role of the arts, it is important to address some statistics regarding students living in poverty. When it comes to these students, poverty is not localized in urban settings. Rural families are disproportionally poor, less educated, and underemployed than their counterparts in other areas of the U.S. (Johnson & O'Hare, 2004). Second, as of 2016, students in low-income families are now most of all students in the U.S. public school system (Suitts, 2016). This means that all arts educators will most likely encounter many students who fit this description. Finally, just because a student lives in poverty does not mean their community is not culturally rich. In fact, quite the contrary. Jeff Todd Titon, an ethnomusicologist, completed decades of fieldwork in communities around the United States (Titon, 2013). He states:

While I did find material poverty in the musical communities that I participated in and studied since the 1960s, *I found the people in those communities to be rich in music and expressive culture*. I never found a cyclic culture of poverty ... either. Instead, I came to understand that poverty was imposed from without by discrimination, exploitation, and corruption. (p. 74)

In other words, some of the cultural gems of oppressed people who live in poverty have been exploited. An example that comes to mind are the exploited musicians of the late 1940s and early 50s. The foundation of American popular music is rooted in the culture of people in poverty (e.g. jazz, blues, hip hop). Many jazz, blues and early rock and roll artists were often relieved of publishing rights, their ticket sales, and other income by oppressive record labels, managers, and concert halls. In some cases, hijacking an art form and calling it their own (D, Chuck, 1997).

There are similar assumptions about students with disabilities. This will be examined below. The point here is that culture is part of what makes us human. As arts educators it is crucial that we acknowledge the strong and diverse cultural communities that we have the privilege to be part of and teach resiliency, preservation, community, relationships, and other enduring values with the arts as our vehicle. Most important, local, state, and federal policy should support such efforts.

Considering Race as a Variable

We cannot examine the correlation between poverty and access to the arts without also examining race. The literature suggests that when poverty is a constant variable, race is a significant factor (Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, and Chung, 2005). In other words, a student who is white and facing economic hardships still is less likely to be identified as needing special education. Skiba et al. states:

Given that poverty was found to be a weak and an inconsistent predictor of disproportionality in the OLS regression, a series of logistic analyses was conducted to explore the influence of the contributions of race, poverty, and a district's resources and learning environment in explaining the odds of special education identification. (p.136)

For example, African American students were shown to be three times more likely to be identified as having a cognitive delay and two times more likely to suffer from emotional disturbance.

So how does race factor into access to the arts? Research has shown for a long period of time that citizens of the United States that are Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) are more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts (Creamer, 2020). We also examined above that poverty is an indicator of access to the arts. One could assume that (race) is a significant factor to our ability as arts educators to offering free and equal access to the arts.

There is some data that can be examined in music education in regard to achievement. Generally white students scored higher in creating, performing, and responding to music than Latinx students, and higher average scores when compared to black students in all areas except performing (Crockett & Blakeslee, 2018). Access to supplemental private instruction is also much higher among white students than BIPOC. It is also common that arts education that is not regularly accessed at a public school is less available to students who are BIPOC and who are living in poverty (2018).

NCLB and RTTT: The Start of School Reorganizing

In 2014, I reported on the lasting effects of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and *Race to the Top* (RTTT) on teachers and students. These two reform efforts opened the door for school choice. The effects can still be felt today. As a result of NCLB, many schools closed because they did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Many states began to offer voucher programs for school choice. On the other hand, *Race to the Top*, renewed support for charter schools, many of which are exempt from state and federal law (Hammel & Fisher, 2014). In addition, school choice was a main priority during the Trump administration (Strauss, Douglas-Gabriel, & Balingit, 2018). In addition, Betsy DeVos doubled down on support for the use of federal funds for private and charter schools. It is yet to be seen where the Biden administration falls on the idea of “school choice”. However, Secretary Cardona oversaw charter school authorizations in his time before coming to Washington (Medler, 2020).

If one student chooses to attend a school that is outside of their zone’s neighborhood, the funds in some states travel with them. Federal funding for public schools is a small slice of the overall funding.

However, the federal funding that is appropriated is designated for important programs like special education, child nutrition, and vocational programs. There are grant programs, however, federal funds are not directly connected to the arts. Most of that funding is left to each state and local governments and can travel with the student in certain states depleting the resources for the students that remain.

The Parallels with Access and Students with Disabilities

Research has suggested for decades that students with exceptionalities have less access to the arts than their peers. Research shows this becomes more common as a student reaches the middle and high school levels of our K-12 public education system. Data shows this peaks at the 7th grade level. In 2018, only 44% percent of students with exceptionalities had access to music, visual art, drama, or dance in the 11th or 12th grade level (Crockett & Blakeslee, 2018).

These data only report on access. The idea of quality, least restrictive instruction is a bit foggy. Crockett and Blakeslee state: “Though it might seem that the answer to the question of whether students have access to a quality arts education should be a simple one, the reality is elusive at best” (p. 8). In other words, when looking at the national standards in each of the disciplines, it is difficult to measure achievement. All the national arts education organizations have published national standards. However, data on achievement in various demographic groups is absent, including those with disabilities. This does not allow our profession to determine the state of a quality arts education for students with disabilities.

Poverty as a Recognized Part of Disability

Public Law 94-142 (IDEA) was one of the most impactful pieces of legislation in the history of K-12 United States education law (Ryan, 2013). While it protects and supports students who are challenged with hearing and visual impairment, emotional disturbance, autism, traumatic brain injury,

and the largest category, specific learning disability (SLD), the law excludes students whose learning problems result in “...environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.”

In 2013, James E. Ryan published an article calling for a change to IDEA based on neuroscience and the impact of poverty on cognitive development. In addressing the IDEA’s exclusion of economic disadvantage as a cause of a learning disability he states: “....even if once justifiable, is no longer defensible given advances in neuroscience research that reveal the impact of poverty on cognitive development” (p. 1458). In other words, allowing external causes of learning challenges should *also* be a part of IDEA. Categories should exist for external factors that are now shown to cause cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physical challenges. Obstacles such as trauma, abuse, fleeing violence and oppression (e.g., refugees), and poverty. Obviously, these hurdles can be intertwined.

Common Challenges for Students in Poverty and Students with Exceptionalities

It is clear from the examination above, children who face poverty share many of the challenges with those who have disabilities. Especially when each group is seeking a quality arts education. The large obstacle that reaches both groups is access. However, studied closely, the access issues are similar. Both groups suffer from school choice. When federal funding travels with students to other public and private schools, it depletes funds for those who remain. In addition, school choice is not equitable. It favors the students who have resources and puts those who don’t at a disadvantage (Hammel & Fischer, 2014).

The other commonality between the two groups is that race can compound the issues examined in this piece. You are more likely to be below the poverty line if you are a person of color (Edelman & Jones, 2004). You are also more likely to be challenged by a disability or suffer from a chronic disease if you are not only a person of color but also a person living in poverty. If you have a disability, live below the poverty line, are BIPOC, or all the above, you have less access to a quality arts education (Crockett &

Blakeslee, 2018). These are all critical issues as the demographic make-up of our country continues to change.

Recommendations

It is clear; according to federal, state, and local special education law, that poverty and its impact on special education has not been fully acknowledged within the legislation. When it comes to access to the arts, both demographic groups suffer from equitable access to not only an arts education but a quality and least restrictive arts education. Policy should be generated on both sides of this model. For example, under Title I, arts and culture should be an integral part of the discretionary grant program. As of now, there is one competitive grant broadly titled *Arts in Education National Program* (www2.ed.gov). In the description it states “...with special emphasis on serving students from low-income families and students with disabilities.” In addition, there is a curricular-based program for teachers entitled the *Arts In Education-Model Development and Dissemination Grants Program* that is focused on student academic performance through the arts. These are only two such programs on a list of 70+ grant programs (<https://www.ed.gov/programs-search/nonprofit-organizations>). Neither of which get at the heart of why such programs are so important or specifically target arts access for those who are living in poverty as a part of cultural preservation and education. This is a necessary addition to Title I and should be examined as part of an existing or new grant program.

Conversely, as stated above, the most recent revision of IDEA did not include established research that poverty can affect a student’s ability to learn. In 2015, as part of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (PL-114-95), Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Act. In examining the list of amendments and changes, there seems to be no movement on this relationship (US Department of Education, 2021a). There is a reference to the connection to Title I. However, it appears that there is no association. Title I is specifically designed to assist schools that have funding challenges through grant

programs (U. S. Department of Education, 2021b). It appears that poverty and everything financial is handled under Title I and all things special education are administered through ESSA/IDEA.

There are two recommendations regarding IDEA/ESSA. First and most obvious is a category for students who are affected by poverty and eligibility standards and guidelines. The six main principles should apply to this demographic as well (e.g, Free and Appropriate Education, Nondiscriminatory Evaluations, Individual Education Programs, Zero Reject, Least Restrictive Environment, and Procedural Safeguards).

Second, IDEA must require a set of arts standards and competencies of our students who are challenged with learning differences. This would include professional development for teachers to implement updated learning objectives and standards. It is ironic that there are not such standards and benchmarks. Some argue that arts educators should just modify existing standards because each individual student is different. There are already broad educational guidelines and standards that could be added to our core standards in the arts to assist educators and administrators.

Not all of the major arts disciplines are equally represented in our public schools. This is a particularly large challenge for the groups we are examining. For example, in many communities dance education is an after-school activity that costs parents/caregivers money. This hinders students without the financial resources from participating. Also, many underrepresented art forms that meet outside school do not have the capability to welcome students with disabilities. School districts should strive to partner with these outside agencies to provide access with local, state, and federal funding to allow for equitable access.

Finally, school choice should be looked at as a civil rights violation. As examined above, school choice depletes resources from BIPOC students, students living in poverty, and students with special needs. In fact, many charter schools that are part of the school choice menu do not follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and are in violation of federal law (Hammel & Fischer, 2014).

Finally, it is important to understand what is gained by an education in the arts for students both in poverty and with learning challenges. Research has shown participation in the arts are crucial to student achievement across many learning domains.

Crockett and Blakeslee state “Arts education facilitates curiosity and imagination, problem-solving, connections between abstract and concrete, self-knowledge and recreation” (p. 4). In addition, receiving an education in the arts allows students to “....create, perform, present, produce, respond and connect with others” (p. 4). This is especially important for students who live in poverty or have disabilities. Depriving children an education in the arts is depriving them of their basic needs as human beings. As the great John Dewey stated in *Democracy and Education* (1916):

In order to have a large number of values in common, all members of the group must have equable opportunity to receive and take from others. There must be a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences. Otherwise, the influences which educate some into masters, educate others into slaves (p. 84).

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HAND IN GLOVE:
UNDERSTANDING THE HAND PUPPET'S LIFE AND LIVENESS
AS A PRECURSOR TO ITS APPLICATION IN EDUCATION AND THERAPY

Felice Amato

Abstract

In this article, Amato discusses how the hand or glove puppet connects intimately to the human body, as well as its role in the expression of the social self. She explores important qualities of the puppet that affect the way it functions, especially at very subtle levels. She describes a variety of insights from teachers and therapists who work in applied puppetry, specifically with students with exceptionalities. These include Maurizio Gioco of Verona Italy, Z Briggs of the Henson Foundation, and Susan Linn. She surveys additional literature on puppets in therapeutic settings. She offers insights and recommendations for ways to integrate puppets into practitioners' work with all students and, in particular, those with exceptionalities.

HAND IN GLOVE: UNDERSTANDING THE HAND'S LIFE AND LIVENESS AS A PRECURSOR TO ITS APPLICATION IN EDUCATION AND THERAPY

Felice Amato

Introduction

Walking through the streets of Verona, Italy, with puppet artist and hand puppet ambassador Maurizio Gioco, my nascent Italian is helped along by his many gestures as he explains why the hand puppet is a distinctly powerful form. Gioco has spent decades as a puppet artist and at least twenty years using hand puppets, and other forms, as interventions to help children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), particularly with a focus on children who are non-verbal. Recently, he has begun collaborating with researchers at the University of Verona.⁷ Tall with long limbs; he powerfully animates and embodies what he wants to impart to this curious American. His gestures, more than his words, convey his passion for the little beings that he easily slips on and brings to life, helping to explain why he has embraced (both literally and metaphorically) the *burattino*.⁸ The loops that Gioco draws in the air describe the relationship of connectivity between a puppeteer's body, an audience, and that of the hand or *glove* puppet, as it is often called in Europe (2019). Before thinking, "Well, of course he uses gestures—he's Italian," one must also remember that his life's work is gesture. The hand puppet is a gestural form—one Gioco has

⁷ See Cini's thesis for an example of Gioco's consultations at the University of Verona.

Language surrounding disability is in flux. In reviewing the literature, one finds language that shows an evolution in the divergent models of disability. Many of the studies—even those from recent years employ the language of deficit, with terms such as "impoverished" or "lack." I endeavor to be cognizant of language and how it shapes our perceptions of value, diversity, and potential. While not wanting to reinforce that framing, the goal of this article is to reveal aspects of puppetry that can contribute to communication skills and hence relationships that are important to the quality of life, which does not take away from affirming the value of a neurodiverse world.

⁸ Italian has different words for different puppet forms. *Burattino* refers to a glove puppet with a long history in various regions of Italy, including Veneto, where Verona is located. The many stock characters that Gioco creatively reinvents form a part of Italian folkloric identity.

contemplated extensively, particularly in how the physicality of the medium establishes relationships and communicates. Extending from the body outward into the world through the reach of the arm and the hand, the gesture of the hand puppet with its many positions, makes known feelings and thoughts.⁹ The gesture is not divorced from the word, rather it is integrated into thinking and the sharing of thought. It dramatizes our invisible intentions.

Researchers are beginning to examine benefits that puppetry might have for children with autism spectrum disorder and other exceptionalities.¹⁰ These studies confirm the experiences of many practitioners, who have used puppetry to provide integrated developmental opportunities along the specific continuum of a child's unique path. Gioco and other puppeteers who also worked in applied puppetry have had success with children who need support in developing communication and socio-emotional skills. It is their knowledge and skills that allow them to use this medium. Should educators and practitioners want to harness puppetry's qualities, it is essential that they consider the form more closely. Puppets are not mere objects, props, or manipulatives; they are best understood as phenomena since their power derives from their complex existence when animated.¹¹ Far from being an easy or straightforward process, their aliveness has captivated many scholars in the past two centuries who have tried to explain this uncanny phenomenon. In her book, *The Case for Make-Believe*, ventriloquist, psychologist, author, and performer Susan Linn says that "Acquiring a systematic understanding of why and how puppets work as therapeutic tools is essential to using them effectively as agents for growth and change, for making sense of the themes and content they evoke, and for making decisions about how to use them therapeutically across a range of situations" (62). Lindsey "Z" Briggs, a Sesame Street puppeteer

⁹ A puppet thinks through its gaze. Hand puppets often look at something, then at the audience, and again at the thing to invite the audience to also think about that thing and make clear that the puppet is thinking about the door, a cookie, another puppet, and so on.

¹⁰ Language is continuing to evolve; at the time of writing this article, these are the recommended terms. They acknowledge some patterns in development relating to disability and discuss interventions that meet individuals' needs.

¹¹ While some people use "manipulate" to describe puppetry, most puppeteers use the word "animate" (a word that comes from the Greek word for breath and soul) since it is essentially the breath that creates the experience of life.

with expertise in autism and puppetry, is also a puppet coach, builder, and educator. She draws on this broad experience in workshops she has designed and led for the Henson Foundation, entitled: “Making Connections Through Puppetry.” In the workshop, Briggs stresses the importance for educators to develop a sensibility for the medium of puppetry as well as skills and a level of comfort.¹² In the report, “Puppets Facilitate Attention to Social Cues in Children with ASD,” which discusses a study that Briggs assisted in, the authors note that, “The style of the puppet in terms of its design and complexity is far less important than the performance of the puppeteer.... More essential than its appearance, the puppet should be operated in accordance with several key principles (Macari 1983). In this article, I draw upon the knowledge of these and other practitioners who work in applied puppetry, specifically with students with enhanced needs, to distill some of their insights and to provide recommendations for best practices. I endeavor to offer practical suggestions and to reveal innate qualities of the hand puppet that allow for its application with children. A deeper understanding of puppetry allows more sensitivity and flexibility, which can help to meet different children’s needs and provide them opportunities to engage at their individual level and with a range of access/entry points.

Children can engage with the art of puppetry in a variety of ways: as audience members, creators, animators, directors, and dramaturges, making it responsive to individual comfort and developmental tasks (both those that are self-initiated as well as those identified by practitioners as objectives). For many children (and adults), puppetry is inherently motivational. It activates affective states, such as wonder, humor, and suspense. In describing a project that they led integrating puppets into drama experiences for children with ASD, Melissa Trimmingham and Nicola Shaughnessy state that “The approach in Imagining Autism links cognition to affect (in keeping with the enactive mind hypothesis) and in so doing, emphasises the importance of embodied engagement to learning in autism” (303-4). Affect and

¹² She encourages having a home for the puppet in the classroom and never wearing a hand puppet while, for example, moving furniture. Ultimately, the puppet either is or isn’t a special being, capable of life. The practitioner should be careful to not build and then undermine that effort through careless gestures.

embodiment are a part of puppetry and its inherent quality of imaginative play, a quintessential activity for children's development. Susan Linn argues that not only is it through play that children learn how to learn, but play is also closely linked to creativity and mental health (11). In her article on puppetry and ASD, Rita Jordan makes a case specifically for supporting social play through facilitating experiences of "spontaneous, affect-driven, and collaborative patterns of behaviour [builds] self-awareness, motivation, memory, socialization, and self-control" (356). She argues for conceptualizing children's play as an interwoven and persisting collection of developing repertoires that integrate the social and cognitive (rather than stages within a hierarchy of development);¹³ puppetry stitches together much of what she describes:

Cognitive development is reflected in the move through sensory exploration of objects, simple repetitive play, relational and constructive play with objects, and purposeful problem solving with an awareness of the functional as well as the physical properties of objects. A full functional appreciation of objects includes the recognition of the active and dispositional properties of toys (such as dolls or toy cars). At the pinnacle of cognitive play is the recognition that pretend play can be divorced from these functional toy props and become truly symbolic using 'pretend' objects, attributes, and functions (249).

The Hand Puppet

Puppetry is a broad category, which includes many forms—each with its specific qualities. In this article, I focus specifically on hand puppets and some of their often taken-for-granted qualities, which affect the way they function, especially at subtle levels.¹⁴ Despite the fact that this form might be what first leaps to mind when children and puppets are mentioned, a practitioner's explicit awareness of its

¹³ Jordan argues: "At the same time as play is developing cognitively, it is also developing socially, and the separation of these two strands of play is only an abstraction for academic purposes; in reality, they are intertwined. Socially, play is often seen to move through steps that are social counterparts to the cognitive ones...joint play routines become more complex and involve both cooperative and competitive social play until the child is able to plan and execute negotiated and fully collaborative social dramas with peers" (249–50).

¹⁴ In American culture, the hand puppet is associated with children and, even with the current popularity of puppetry for adults, the form is not as widely used as others. The United States lacks a marketplace/plaza tradition such as the Punch and Pulcinella form that entertained families. In Russia, Obraztsov, for example, elevated the form, gaining respect.

subtleties and specificities makes them more responsive, sensitive, intentional, and strategic.¹⁵ Hand puppets have long been staples of home toy boxes, children's theatrical programming, therapeutic environments, classrooms, and other settings where imaginative play is seen as fundamental to all children's development.¹⁶ This has been especially true in the twentieth century, often called the "Century of the Child" in the United States and western Europe. It was a time when a radical reimagining of children and childhood led to a boom in toy design and accompanying theorizations around toys and child development—the latter a new concept.

Hand puppets offer many advantages, in great part because of the inherent social quality of the medium; they invite interaction and performance for the self and others. The very morphology of the hand puppet makes it imminently available; their hand-size openings and glove-like fit invite spontaneous use. Caroline Astell-Burt describes them as a vehicle for an individual to combine the potential of creativity and communication to develop a "personal coherence" through "creative expression" (xi–xii). Hand puppets are easy to access and, because a hand puppet is directly manipulated, Engler and Fijan note that "The puppeteer can express himself... without having to overcome the complex problems of control by rods or strings," making them "the most natural and... easiest type to construct" (19). Some would argue that, since their movements are direct extensions of our own, hand puppets are more seemingly alive than other forms (Astell-Burt, 8).

Gioco has many puppets in his repertoire, but most prominent in his practice as a puppet artist and a therapist are the classic hand puppets of the Veneto region of northern Italy. Indeed, the hand puppet is "one of the simplest and most widespread types of puppet and can be found across the world in a variety of cultures. Because it is extremely portable and need cost very little to make, it has long been

¹⁵ For example, just as with music, the practitioner should endeavor to become knowledgeable and skilled in the form themselves so as to offer high-quality experiences with the art form.

¹⁶ The enduring value of puppet-centered play for children reveals the artificial and culturally-bound divisions between the pedagogical, social-emotional, entertaining, and therapeutic in children's complex development.

the favourite type of puppet for street performance” (Glove Puppet). It is not surprising, then, that Gioco’s puppets still venture out into the street. Right at the door of his atelier, there is a large wooden desk where he paints and attaches eyes and hair. Across the front, hung upside down by loops, as is the custom during performances, Gioco has a collection of what he refers to as his *burattini sociali*, or social puppets. These are the puppets he takes to the restaurant or the plaza to interact with people, drawing them into spontaneous play. The hand puppet tradition of the region is not a one-way performance; it is an interactive form (like many other related traditions across eastern and western Europe and Morocco which emerged as forms of entertainment in the marketplace and town square). Their larger-than-life action drew attention to the small figures amid these busy settings, but they also drew people with their banter—banter between the audience and the puppet and, often, the puppet and an interlocutor. The latter stands outside the small theater or, in Gioco’s case, can be the animator himself unhidden, witnessing, reacting, and even commenting on the puppet’s actions. They often translate for the audience because the traditional puppets of this form may speak only in quasi-human voices.¹⁷ Astell-Burt discusses the potential of the hand puppet for comedy that arises due to the closeness of the animator and the puppet through interaction and reaction (8). Puppeteers need not be invisible or hidden—especially in contemporary puppetry. Hand puppets function well as ventriloquist dummies. (For an example, see Susan Linn’s work with Audrey Duck.)

The Puppet as Gesture

While Gioco’s own puppets can be quite expressionistic and experimental (he frequently reinvents stock characters in surprising ways), the form is ancient. The wooden head of the traditional *burattino* sits on the index finger—the importance of which is not lost on Gioco (2020). For Gioco, the

¹⁷ The hand puppet form often involves the use a swazzle, a small device inserted in the mouth which produces a kazoo-like effect, making the voice not quite human and setting the puppet apart as its own creature, subject to its own rules and heightening its trickster essence.

body itself offers a powerful tool for children to externalize and the index finger, or pointer, is perhaps the most powerful of indicators and pointing, the essence of a gesture as the externalization of thought.¹⁸ As Barbara Tversky points out in her book entitled, *Mind in Motion: How Action Shapes Thought*, all gesture is an externalization. “Gestures come first, before words, both in evolution and development,” she says (110). Tversky discusses how even babies’ small gestures are full of meaning. She too specifically describes the act of pointing, which can range from a demand for something to an effort to express what they know.¹⁹ Words, she says, are (for the most part) arbitrary sounds, whereas a gesture “bears immediate relation to their meanings” (113). Through gesture the puppet can build worlds, describing relationships to actual space while also co-constructing an imaginary theatrical world between the mind of the gesturer and an audience—a space where a puppet’s life can unfold.

Since applied puppetry is a form of drama-based pedagogy, puppetry can draw upon the body of research that supports its benefit in the development of reading, social skills, expressive/receptive language, and creative thinking...[providing] students with and without disabilities with additional opportunities to develop oral language and vocabulary skills.”²⁰ In “Material Voices: Intermediality and Autism,” Melissa Trimingham and Nicola Shaughnessy describe ways that children with autism create meaning (differently) and the body’s greater role in their cognition through interacting with the physical and social environment (303). Through their ongoing theater project, they came to understand that imagination in children with ASD might be different; children might recreate the world around them in what they call their “enactive minds”:

Shaun Gallagher’s view of the centrality of the body in the action of cognition [challenges] the ‘body snatchers’ that see the essential action occurring in the brain (Gallagher 2015) ...We came to understand the importance of our imaginative engagement with the autistic experience and perception of physical and social environments, the need to facilitate social (and creative)

¹⁸ The name that in Latin means to say or make known *towards*.

¹⁹ Tversky describes her granddaughter’s gestural syntax when she points to the sky to express that she knows that airplanes fly.

²⁰ Puppetry aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning and the Kennedy Center’s resources on UDL, as well as those on Arts integration.

imagination, and empathy on the part of the participants through intermedial elements. These material voices and rich affordances provided us with tools for learning as our cognition was also facilitated through action-and-object orientated perspectives (303-4).

“The puppet is fundamentally oral, and its orality differentiates it from sculptural objects or dolls,” suggests by Tova Ackerman in “The Puppet is a Metaphor.” However, that orality is not necessarily speech. Even non-verbal puppetry addresses literacy concepts such as cause and effect and beginning, middle, and end. Puppetry allows children specific experiences with communication continuums that involve gestures as a form of speech.²¹ Ackerman argues that even when it has no language of its own, the puppet acts in concert with the presentation of a story (in which, at times, the audience vocalizes the words). The puppet has been intimately associated with orality in societies that did not have written language, where it was accompanied by songs that were passed down through repetition. It is specifically through gesture, she says, that it is able to reach deeply into the psyche, offering another dimension to speech. “It gives the speaker a way to state a thought in a strong way before a word is uttered” (9).

With a twist of the wrist, Gioco deftly illustrates the puppet’s ability to create an intimate conversation with the animator and then to turn and triangulate that communication, externalizing it to an audience (2020). The puppet, as a performing art, is also communication. Herein lies one of its strengths as a tool to help promote the externalization of a child’s communication, moving children towards language production and verbal engagement. Gioco stresses the importance of helping children to face their puppet outward. In some instances, he gives them simple sets that frame and focus the action outward. In others, he often sits close, one-on-one and face to face with students, using the puppet to hold their focus and helping to coax the puppet to face outward, thus becoming an intermediary. While

²¹ It also offers children a chance to tell stories and claims space and time for their stories with the expectation that others will listen. Gradually, as shyer children become more confident in their delivery, they strengthen the skills that allow them to command attention and to feel entitled to do so.

there is also a value in an internalized dialogue between the child and the puppet they are animating, Gioco's goal with his clients is to draw them into social interaction (2021).²²

Externalizing Emotion

In her study of puppetry as a tool for exploring self-awareness and empathy, Bani Malhorta finds that a puppet allows one of her clients to specifically externalize her emotions, in particular those upon which she perseverates (perhaps indicating her internal drive to resolve them). In the process of externalization, it would seem, names are given to emotions and a dramaturgy to emotional conflict and confusing experiences: "The puppets functioned as a safe and somewhat controllable physical object for exploration of complex feelings. The use of puppets served as a medium to externalize Lisa's feelings of loneliness and anxiety." Malhorta draws on a hypothesis posited by Trimingham (2010) that the puppets' usefulness lies in part in its ability to embody an externalization of inner emotions and therefore shift focus away from their closed inner world, "as if another presence suddenly shares their lonely perception of the world" (Trimingham in Malhotra, 188).

After centuries of performances, it is perhaps not surprising that puppets generally have the potential to capture children's attention. However, this is not consistently or universally true; the specifics are important to analyze if one wishes to apply puppetry within therapeutic or educational settings. An aforementioned study, recently completed by a team at Yale University, addressed a common concern that "children with autism are less likely to attend to and engage emotionally with their social partners, which limits their exposure to a host of important learning opportunities and experiences" (Cummings). The study sought to introduce a puppet and analyze closely the effect it might have on children, controlling for variables. "We found that while children with autism paid less attention than typically

²² It is Gioco's contention that the puppet has a fundamental ability to both nurture an inward, internal dialogue as well as to send it outward, supporting children's development in interpersonal interaction and verbal communication. The physical process of a child turning a puppet to face outward is mirrored in the internal processes of connection.

developing peers when an interactive partner was human, their attention was largely typical when the interactive partner was Violet, the puppet” (Cummings). The researchers conclude that “Unlike humans, puppets appear to elicit typical patterns of attention in young children with ASD. Given that puppets can deliver simplified, salient, and highly contingent verbal and nonverbal social and communicative cues, they may play an important role as facilitators in the therapeutic process” (Macari 1983).²³

In a study Gioco assisted with, the researcher observed an improvement across various metrics including communication, when a variety of hand puppets were used (those that resembled people, both realistically and more symbolically, as well as animals). “[P.J. and S.P.] were also the two participants who, from the first exposure to the puppet, presented and then maintained their interest in the proposal over the course of the ten sessions” (Cini 131).²⁴ In the article entitled, “Material Voices: Intermediality and Autism,” Melissa Trimingham and Nicola Shaughnessy use puppets as intermediaries. “In Imagining Autism, as these examples indicate, the intermediality of the project’s title created insights into how children with autism create meaning (differently), and the role of the body interacting with the physical and social environment in developing cognition. Our approaches helped us to understand more about imagination in autism and how those affected recreate in their minds the world around them” (303).

Introducing Hand Puppets

Puppets should be introduced slowly with some children. As with many successful activities and interactions, a choice should be offered. Be sensitive to extreme hesitance, disinterest, or rejection. Both Briggs and Gioco mention the importance of allowing a child to reject puppets. Gioco reminds us that, “Not everyone likes dogs. Not everyone likes puppets” (2021). Astell-Burt points out that hand puppets are accessible to watch for most students but animating an object in close proximity to the body may not

²³ They caution, “Whether attention to the puppet’s social-communicative cues translates into better social engagement and more effective communication skills in ASD remains to be determined” (Macari 1983).

²⁴ While not tested in these studies, one might also explore whether a child could channel and their attention through a puppet to enhance their focus. In theater and puppetry training, an animator may take a puppet or even an object and channel and shift their intentions into that object. For children, letting a puppet lead them around the room as they discover and respond to their environment might be an interesting activity.

be for every child. Laying them out and seeing how a child engages is a good first step (13). Are they interested in them and, if so, which? A child may engage strongly with a puppet in an unexpected way. All engagement is engagement, regardless of how *seemingly* minimal it might be. Briggs describes some children who took multiple weeks to allow a puppet to go from being in their peripheral vision all the way to direct touch.

Animating itself, should a child choose to try it, offers opportunities for both fine and gross motor practice, coordination, and proprioception. Hand warm-ups could be built into the routine of using puppets, helping a child explore their dexterity. Engler and Fijan detail the six worldwide ways that one can fit a hand puppet on the hand (20–22). Different from Gioco’s index finger, they prefer what they refer to as the modern method, which most American hand puppeteers use. This style, where the index and second finger are inserted in the head, has benefits. Through this, the hand is more relaxed, and the puppet’s arms can stretch more widely. For children—especially those with exceptionalities that affect their dexterity, hand strength, or fine or gross motor control—the single finger or even the two fingers in the head accompanied by the need to move the others independently may present challenges and frustrations. Those children can hold a rod that extends into a puppet’s head, or a wooden spoon could become the puppet.²⁵ Some children will want to feel the hand within the puppet or otherwise explore the object permanence of the hand that has disappeared inside. If a child is disturbed by the hand hidden in the glove, a Styrofoam ball or something similar on the finger (as was used by the great Sergei Obratsov) might allow them to focus.

The Hand Puppet and the Senses

²⁵ In terms of the connection to gesture and language, one might hypothesize that pointing with a stick is also integral to a child's communication impulses.

The puppet offers multiple opportunities for sensory and proprioceptive input, which should not be underestimated. Briggs had us all squeeze our own hand through the felt body of the puppet, pointing out that this was unlike any other feeling (pressure and the firm but yielding warmth of flesh). In her talk, “Looking Out and Seeing In: A Journey into the Body,” Jennifer Tantia describes different types of touch and their neurological effects. She asks adult participants to place their hands on the back of their head and switch between feeling their head with their hands while being felt by their hands, and then also to try to feel their hands with their head—a more challenging task, but one that alters their senses. “When you're feeling your head with your hands, that is an example of body image...looking at [and] feeling yourself from the outside in. When you shift inside your body or, in this case, inside your skull (inside your head), and you're sensing yourself from inside. That's body schema. And that's mostly what we do when we're cultivating embodiment.”

When making puppets for or with children, one should consider the tactile qualities of the fabric and construction. The face is important. Briggs has had experiences with kids who want to grab and squeeze the felt puppet's face which is not necessarily aggressive but necessitating good construction. Gioco notes the triangle formed by the eyes and the mouth as the key to a child's interest in that face. As the key to reading the puppet's thoughts and intentions, Macari et al., cites a conversation between Briggs and Henson: “The eyes should be clearly visible and appear to focus on something in front of them, in most cases, their viewer or social partner (1983). Although some studies have been carried out using puppets with detachable faces that clearly express a fixed emotion, many practitioners prefer puppets with more fixed but neutral, open expressions that allow for a child to project a range of emotions conveyed by the body language, voice, rhythm, etc. Briggs talks about the importance of a mouth that suggests a smile but does not exaggerate it.²⁶ While this may seem to lack range, in mask improvisation

²⁶ While often undervalued in comparison to qualitative data, the importance of anecdotes from years of experience is revealed when speaking to practitioners. The specificity of Briggs' puppet design which has been longitudinally ‘tested’ in her work, is supported by a memorable anecdote she tells in the workshop: A teacher tried to soothe an

work, for example, a fixed mask—even one designed to be the epitome of neutral, can successfully be played as many emotions.

Bringing a Puppet to Life

Puppetry is thought in action. “Every thought is embodied.... This lends the thoughts and actions more power and impact,” says Mervyn Millar in *Puppetry: How to Do It* (45). He emphasizes three components of successful animation in puppetry: *clarity*, *focus*, and *timing* (43). “Clarity is the most important thing in puppetry. Every time the puppet moves, the audience guesses what it is thinking (e.g., ‘He’s nervous...’). They then watch to see if that next movement bears out their guess.... When a puppet’s intention, mood, rhythm or movements are clear, the audience is more likely to guess correctly” (44). This, he argues, is necessary for audience investment. Many novice puppeteers move their puppets too quickly, or their moves are too tentative, vague, or complex to be accurately read and followed. That is not to say that some dramatic confusion, suspense, and surprise are not necessary to good puppetry. However, they will be most effective when they are framed with clear and specific actions that allow the audience to invest their interest.²⁷ Briggs and Henson, cited in Macari, add: “Details that give a sense of character such as distinctive voice, movements, and playfulness can provide additional appeal” (1983).

Clarity of thought and feeling, along with their physical embodiment and location within a character, might offer some unexpected benefits as children learn to identify and manage emotional responses to complex social interactions. For children who need that support, the clarity of puppets’ actions and statements may help children to separate their own emotions and role powerfully and

upset child with a grinning hand puppet, only to make him more despondent. A few weeks later, when she pulled the same puppet out, the child exclaimed something to the effect of “There is that puppet that laughed at me when I was upset!”

²⁷ Someone new to the art form should practice breaking down a chain of thought and motivations into clear actions. For example: 1.) The puppet sees the butterfly. 2.) The puppet looks at the audience to see if they see it. 3.) The puppet looks again. 4.) The puppet takes a tiny step towards the butterfly. 5.) The puppet’s hands come to their cheeks; they are thrilled. (Note that checking in with the audience is also typical, though not universal, in hand puppet performance.)

symbolically in a situation through a character. Based on her research, Malhotra speculates that “Even though people with autism might share others’ emotions, they might be unsure about its source or how to manage it, making it a struggle for ASD people to step back from the overwhelming empathic connections resulting in an empathic imbalance” (109).

Clarity may also support the puppet’s usefulness in fostering the development of the symbolic play. Most children will begin to develop symbolic play at age two, and the process will continue. “Subsequently, the child begins to perform what is called combinatorial symbolic play. This consists in recognizing the various components of a sequence of actions. The child engaged in play, experiencing a certain role, learns to master it, and plays it without necessarily carrying out all the actions associated with it, shortening or completely eliminating some actions. In this phase, which occurs after the age of three, the meaning for the child is more important than the action itself. The child, getting into a certain role, must perform the foreseen actions and the emotions felt by the person he is representing (Cini, 47–48). For some children, this will be less developed. Gioco has noted that some children will remain in the process of repeating and rehearsing a short sequence that he demonstrates. He may even make a video for the child to access at home (2021). Gesture and the gestural form that is puppetry require what Tversky calls a “slimming of information” (115).

While there are some rules that most puppeteers identify as crucial to the aliveness and effectiveness of puppets, they lend themselves to all sorts of innovations. “The natural zaniness...allows for the free flow of ideas...the lack of a set of conventions is one of the conventions of the puppetry world” (Ackerman 9). This includes how the puppets and the sets (if there are any) are constructed. Contemporary puppetry has pushed the boundaries as well, opening material performance practices for vast experimentation, certainly granting permission for practitioners to defy conventions and create practices that work.

While for many, hand puppets are relatively easy to manipulate, since they are a direct extensions of limb function, this is not true for everyone (Astell-Burt 8). To be alive breath and ease must flow through the animator into the puppet, and this cannot happen if there is discomfort or struggle. Thus, they must fit the puppeteer's body and abilities. One should consider a child's strength, dexterity, muscle tone, and control so that they do not interfere with a child's ability to be expressive. In a talk, "Why the Authentic Voice is Necessary When Making Puppet Theatre Around Disability," given as part of the Nottingham Puppet Festival's "Puppetry and Wellbeing" series, Dr. Emma Fisher, a researcher, puppeteer, animator, theatre designer, playwright, and educator, discusses the breakthrough that she had when she stopped making puppets to fit an image or idea and started making puppets that worked with her body. Fisher's research explores unconventionally constructed puppets that reflect the disabled body. She described how, at times, the puppet's required manipulation techniques even caused her pain and demonstrated a process she developed where she builds on her own body (for example, on her hand and arm). This construction technique is also a dialogue with the kinds of manipulation she wishes to achieve and that she discovers as she works (Fisher).

Not all children will be motivated or able to make, alter, or even decorate a puppet, but many will. Often considered a total art form because they allow children a chance to apply 2D and 3D art techniques, creating or altering puppets also offers a natural chance to engage in prototyping and other components of design-thinking in dialogue with kinesthetics.²⁸ *The World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts* extensively details the many variations in hand puppets that one finds across the world (Glove Puppet). These variations affect the appearance and animation qualities of the puppet and ultimately influence the personality and even the story they tell.²⁹ This not only highlights human ingenuity and the versatility of

²⁸ Empathy is built into good design and design thinking and is an added benefit for social-emotional growth. The problem-solving and the ownership that comes from a redesign is also beneficial.

²⁹ A puppet's characteristic movements, created through construction and animation, may give rise to a distinct personality and that may suggest a plot or storyline. Puppeteers embrace these happenstance results because they can give rise to great stories.

the human hand, but it also should offer practitioners who work with children the encouragement to modify any aspect of a puppet that interferes with a child's manipulation.³⁰ Because they are imaginative play, there can be great freedom and humor which emerges though animating a puppet, and this humor can open more relaxed space for children to perform. This humor also provides a certain creative freedom that practitioners can draw on when working with children to embrace the diverse experiences that they might have and lower levels of stress. "It is important that the person performing the puppet approaches it with focus and intent, has a sense of humor, and can express clear personalities" (Macari 1983). During a symposium, Gioco tells the audience that by nature,

"Puppets are disobedient. It is not easy to put the words we want in their mouth, we can try, but sometimes this does not happen.

In my opinion, [it is] for at least three reasons:

- 1) By their nature, they are rebellious.
- 2) They have their own language, which depends on their personality, which already has a vocabulary.
- 3) They do not like to follow the closed path of writing." (Gioco 2013)

Even in language and sound, a puppet need not speak in any predetermined manner; they needn't even use words.

Special Considerations

Gioco playfully describes puppets as disobedient. Adults should be aware that, as Linn notes, puppets *are* play and everything that comes out of their mouths is play.³¹ It may be up to the adult to set

³⁰ As designed objects that must negotiate with specific human bodies, puppets are prototyped and refined. Many puppet artists design *and* animate their puppets. Encouraging kids to alter a puppet to work better is modeling the approach of professional puppet artists.

³¹ This is one of the many reasons why Linn reminds us not to have a puppet enforce rules. "Given that, 'everything that comes out of Audrey's mouth is play,' she cannot create the necessary metastructure that reminds the child that something is pretending—a key aspect to working things out safely. Linn, however, can do this job" (Amato). Briggs concurs. They should not be the ones to correct behavior in a classroom; theirs is another role.

that tone by activating their own humor and zaniness but also, in some instances, setting limits. What if a child wants to be violent with a puppet and to symbolically hurt the puppet for any number of reasons, including an effort to work through trauma? This is a challenging question and one that Susan Linn discusses with complexity in her book, *The Case for Make Believe: Saving Play in a Commercialized World*, drawing upon her training and a long career working with children undergoing painful medical procedures and other forms of trauma. While there isn't space to give this question adequate consideration here, I want to note the gravitas of this question and encourage any practitioner to consider in advance their response to a child wanting to harm a puppet in a symbolic way.³² Two takeaways from Linn's work are that, because the puppet is play, the puppet cannot be the one to set boundaries—even about its own treatment. Also, while Linn ultimately decides to allow her puppets to undergo some painful acts (for example, be given, hundreds of painful shots by a child who is facing traumatic medical treatments), she requires that anything painful done to the puppet have a reason because, as she points out, what separates a medical procedure from torture is the intention to heal and not to hurt. The experience for a child undergoing this kind of treatment can be indistinguishable—this rule helps to make some sense of the difference.

Conclusion

Puppets can have powerful benefits for all children and hand puppets, due to their very nature, offer many ways to engage children in imaginative and developmental play. Nancy Renfro describes them as “extraordinary creatures...ambassadors between a child's inner and outer worlds” (2). They are

³² The harm I am discussing here doesn't involve damaging the object, nor does it refer to hurting the animator, whose hand is inside that puppet. Injuring a person should not be tolerated. However, what about the puppet that exists in a nebulous space of imagination and hypotheticals? It is important to note the long history of puppets undergoing slapstick violence within comedy (possibly a healthy and cathartic part of a culture's negotiation with taboos), and even contemporary puppetry for adults often draws upon the puppet's unique existence to explore trauma and even death. To make this off-limits for children, it asks them to self-limit what adults do not. Establishing explicit expectations for a class puppet, for example, while introducing it can be helpful. Modeling care and elevating the puppet's existence by, as Briggs suggests, designating a place for the puppet to live and sleep in a classroom could set up a different expectation than throwing them into a box or bag.

human-like but they are also objects of fantasy, allowing for the rehearsal of life's complex interactions and creating a space to test boundaries of what is acceptable—and possible. Hand puppetry practices have evolved across the world over the centuries but there is an innate wisdom that had developed from skilled puppeteers' intimate experiences with the form and how it works. While puppetry is immensely adaptable, there is much to be gained by drawing upon this body of knowledge. Through the experiences of practitioners of applied puppetry, one can begin to understand aspects of the form itself that must be understood to be sensitively applied—and adapted. Each child will have a different experience with the puppet. It is important for the educator or practitioner of applied puppetry to consider the vast range of potential opportunities for growth offered by the hand puppet—many subtle and perhaps even unconsidered or taken-for-granted. "It is not necessary to be a professional puppeteer or even have formal training in order to effectively manipulate a puppet; however, training is, indeed, helpful to develop more advanced skills and insights" (Macari 1983). These skills and insights reveal and leverage multifaceted opportunities to incorporate hand puppets. It is important that any practitioner be responsive to the child with whom they are working, and this allows for that response to address both explicit and implicit aspects of puppetry. Susan Linn reminds us that each child's play—like a fingerprint—is unique. It is a product of that specific child's capacity for fantasy and their unique effort to make meaning out of their individual experience (12). It is also a response to a specific sensory encounter with the object and the phenomenological response to both the object and its aliveness, where one might find the deepest well to draw from when working with students with exceptionalities.

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Images for Felice Amato's article:



Maurizio's Burrattini or Hand Puppets. Photos by Maurizio Gioco





A puppet in his bed that a student spontaneously prepared. He wasn't interested in animating the puppet the first week after he made it.



Students at Joseph Lee Elementary perform with puppets inspired by Z Briggs' workshop, *Making Connections Through Puppetry* sponsored by the Henson Foundation.

The Power and Art of Dance

Antoine Hunter

Abstract

Antoine Hunter writes a powerful and meaningful essay centered on his life growing up as a Black and Deaf person. He focuses on the power of communication and ways dance can cross many perceived barriers to communication. His final words of the essay convey his thought process in writing this piece – “I always say, just because you can hear doesn’t mean you know how to listen.”

Eds. Note: Mr. Antoine Hunter is a Black, deaf, award-winning dance artist and educator. A past keynote speaker at the Intersections Conference we invited him to present his ideas about resilience, his work and teaching. We respect Mr. Hunter’s language and believe it is essential we leave his words as written without editing it for alignment with traditional English writing. As an English language learner, we believe it is important you hear his voice directly as he intended.

The Power and Art of Dance

Antoine Hunter

The Power of the Art of Dance

Dance has the power to enable communication and expression between individuals that saves lives. It saved my life and it can save yours!

In high school, I felt very alone and found it hard to fit in with the other kids—to be understood...to be heard. I spoke poetically in a way that combined English, Black ASL, ASL and Ebonics. People didn’t understand me. “Move Like Mango” people did not know what that meant nor try to understand me. Yet when I express through dance, people start to understand me. Dance saved my life as a former suicide survivor through being able to communicate my thoughts and feelings to other people through movement.

I went on to learn other “languages of dance”—like African, ballet, and so much more. Soon I began to teach these languages to others. Dance is so powerful. Not only does it have the ability to bring people together, but it also has the power to heal.

Sometimes there’s no verbal words to describe what you need to express.

Imagine growing up in a world where everyone speaks a different language on mute and they don’t take the time to learn your language and/or press the unmute button and watch a different

kind of movement in communication. We gotta be open minded to people's physical expression and allow them to move. When you can't express yourself, you go crazy, right?

Teaching is the Key to Opening the Door

As a Black Indigenous Deaf person, my priority is to create a safe space for Deaf, Hard of Hearing (HoH) and hearing children and adults to learn. To create a safe environment for Deaf and HoH children, there needs to be an open space where they can easily see the teacher. Having a mirror is very helpful. Be mindful of the environment--Deaf people are very sensitive to lights and vibrations. Flickering lights or very loud noises outside/next door such as high bass music or construction can be very distracting. Do not assume just because they are Deaf that they will be able to focus better by ignoring loud noises. It's not true.

There is no one kind of Deaf person, there are so many different identities and cultures within the Deaf community, some with differing access needs such as DeafBlind or DeafDisabled. Communicate with your Deaf students/Deaf students' parents on what their access needs may be. A safe choice of music and my personal favorite is Jazz music. It's great because it can reach everyone in a different way. Some Deaf people can hear the high notes but cannot hear the low tones, others can hear the low tones but not the high notes and some can't hear either but can feel the bass. The musical variety in Jazz music can fit many different access needs.

While teaching there are many different ways to get a Deaf student's attention. You can stomp your feet firmly (not with anger), you can switch the lights on and off one or two times, you can get someone else's attention close by to the student who can inform them the teacher wants their attention, you can freeze until all the students pick up and freeze too.

Next as a part of my practice we explore ASL Dance, an emergent genre of incorporating visual-gestural movements unique to signed languages that I've been developing since 2008. This includes easy movements utilizing shapes, emotions, elements of the world and encourages intrapersonal creativity development leading to increased interpersonal skills. Children, especially Deaf children, find this easier than adults. Adults tend to overthink the movements to ASL as it's like patting and rubbing simultaneously. I allow my students to express this movement and it leads me to teach other technique movements whether they are ballet, modern or folk dance. It's always good to be prepared to throw out your original plan and replace it with a new one. This allows yourself to flow with your creative teaching by allowing your students to move and explore. This opens the door to opportunities to discover more about ourselves and where we are in our practice.

The Importance of Teachers Who Look Like Their Students

My practice focuses on finding your voice and being able to express yourself in a safe space.

The biggest rarity of my practice is the fact that I am representing Deaf culture for Deaf people as a Deaf person of color. This is also true in hearing communities where Black teachers are

way too far and few. Many times, the best thing you can do for Deaf children is hire Deaf dance teachers, including BIPOC Deaf teachers and other intersecting identities.

The Bottom Line

I always say just because you can hear doesn't mean you know how to listen.