

# FIRST ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE



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## Welcome Message

We are delighted to present the 1st anniversary special edition of 'The ArtSparks Angle', Professional Learning Program Newsletter. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the readers, volunteers and lovely individuals who contributed articles, for being a part of this amazing journey. This special issue reflects the last one year, and features a message from our Founder & Executive Director, in addition to an art-based activity for you, our readers, to try. We also have Neha Bhatt, a past EdSparks Collective participant, sharing her experiences of bringing transformative art education experiences to the children in rural Uttarakhand.

## Message From Our Founder & Executive Director



ArtSparks Foundation was started with a firm belief in the immense potential of art to enrich and transform student learning. Over the years, as we've journeyed through with a resolve to revitalize education through art, the work we've conducted on the ground through our Creative Learning Lab program has served to demonstrate this potential. However, our journey has also revealed the continued need for us to more effectively convey the educational value of art to a broader audience.

Recognizing that dismantling popular yet problematic narratives surrounding art in education is imperative in order for art to become a mainstay of the educational landscape, we've chosen to share practice, not just our own, but also that of partner organizations across India—those who have, in their own respective journeys to revitalize education, committed themselves to bringing rich and meaningful art experiences to the children they serve. It has given us great pleasure over this year to feature, within each issue of *The ArtSparks Angle*, their inspirational stories, augmented by research in the field of art education. And we look forward to continuing to bring to you these stories in our quest to alter perceptions of art, and inspire the adoption of transformative practices that involve the arts in education.

## Spotlight: Story From the Field

*It gives us great pleasure to showcase Neha Bhatt, our EdSparks Collective (2020-21) participant, in this section. This excerpt includes Neha's experience of participating in EdSparks Collective and conducting the Action Learning Project (ALP) as part of the program.*

As an educator, being part of Edsparks collective was one of the most insightful and amazing experiences. Packed with the learnings and understandings from the collective, I was eager to put them into practice.

I conducted my Action Learning Project as part of the program with the children in rural Uttarakhand while working at Simple Education Foundation. The children had limited exposure to any kind of arts intervention. I worked with collage medium for the project. Initially, I wasn't sure if I would enjoy conducting the project as I was not comfortable with collage and used to believe that I was not good at arts. But, from the first day till the end, I completely immersed myself in the workshop and it turned out to be a beautiful experience for me.

The most outstanding thing for me from this whole experience was to see how children stayed on task even when they had no prior experience of doing such an art activity full of explorations for an hour or more. In the first few sessions, they were a little hesitant to spend more time in the explorations. Some of them wrapped up explorations quickly and seeing this other children also hurried finishing their explorations. I

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was expecting children to get annoyed while I was pushing them to explore more with the paper, but most of the children got comfortable to spend more time on explorations from the second session onwards. I think providing the appropriate amount of support and space for letting these explorations happen can go a long way in building their observation and problem solving skills.

It was admirable to see the grit displayed by children to not give up while they faced several challenges in their community models. In a few cases, when children were confused or felt like giving up, I saw that children from other groups were ready to help them solve their problems. The space created for reflecting and sharing reaffirms their thoughts and feelings and also enhances their communication skills. It was also a safe space for children to share their experiences about the workshop and any



feedback they would like to give the facilitator. It was quite challenging in the beginning to make the children share their materials (glue and scissors) as some of the children were hesitant to share. But, as the sessions progressed, children became more cooperative and mindful of sharing materials. They sat together, took suggestions from each other and figured out possible ways to effectively manage the materials by themselves.

I realized that a robust arts-based intervention has the potential to provide a space for children to express their thoughts, emotions and ideas freely without the fear of being judged, who otherwise don't express themselves in a lot of other spaces. An intervention such as this not only allows them to hone their skills but also build their self confidence, as there was definitely a sense of pride that everyone felt at the end of their presentations during the ALP. While looking at their final artworks, there was so much distinctiveness in each of the work, their ideas, thought process and what's going on in their minds were clearly visible in the final artworks.

After EdSparks Collective and the ALP, I had so many ideas for workshops that I wanted to conduct with these children. Just a few days before leaving the village, I conducted a 'Self-Portrait' workshop with children. The children were excited and enthusiastic to create their self-portraits. They supported and encouraged each other in the art-making process.

After completing her self portrait, Kanchan said, *"I never thought I'd be able to draw a face, but this looks nice."* Seeing all the wonderful and vivid self-portraits made by children and the fact that how much they enjoyed the process certainly made me more curious and passionate about art education.

Attending EdSparks indeed sparked so many ideas in my mind regarding the kind of themes and mediums that can be explored. The biggest shift that happened within me is believing how arts education is not all about giving children a blank sheet of paper and letting them do whatever they wish to do with it. I came to discover how the right balance between well-structured curriculum and freedom to explore can go a long way in bringing better learning outcomes and experiences for children. I learned how a well supported arts intervention that includes a platform for exploration, reflection, communication and collaboration can bring out so much in children. It also made me wonder how simple tools and regular things can be explored in multiple ways and open up the doors to endless possibilities if we can hold on to them.

I experienced art and art education in ways that I never experienced in any classroom before. To know the endless possibilities that an arts intervention can offer to explore colors, exploration, collaboration, observation and empathy has only ignited in me the drive to continue pursuing art education.



## Art-Based Activity: Reimagining Waste



*In this special issue, we would like to give you an opportunity to experience and understand how visual arts can foster imagination, problem solving and divergent thinking in children through a hands-on activity. Please try out this activity by yourself or with children and share your experience with us.*

To thrive in a world that is constantly evolving, we need our children to be equipped with a set of skills and attitudes—those that prepare them to tackle the known, and also the unknown. They should be able to push their limits, think beyond the possibilities and come up with creative solutions. Divergent thinking is one of the ways which will encourage children to think flexibly and generate multiple ideas. Now, let's try an activity to develop divergent thinking skills through the arts.

### Reimagining Waste

Materials: A4 Paper, pencil, waste items and objects around the house like pencil shavings, fruit/vegetable peels, wrappers, etc.

Steps:

1. Look around your house and collect a few objects, materials that you consider as waste
2. Observe the shape, size, texture and patterns on these. Look at it from all angles.
3. What if this was big or small? Does it remind you of something else?
4. Re-imagine this waste material/object to be something else. How many different things can it be?
5. Observe the object and sketch it by observing the line, shapes, textures and details.
6. Make additions to your sketch to transform it into your reimagined object.
7. Once you finish drawing one idea, try this with another object and repeat the process.

*When you have finished your work, please share it with us on Facebook or Instagram and tag us at @artsparksfoundation. We'd love to see your work! For more such interesting and engaging art-based activity sheets, please visit: <http://www.art-sparks.org/activity-resources.html>*

## Messages from Our Readers

A big shout out to all our amazing readers!! Your encouragement and appreciation has helped us to stay motivated during these challenging times. We look forward to serving you in the best manner possible. We are happy to share a few messages received from our readers as part of the first anniversary celebration. Thank you all for your lovely wishes and support!

*"The ArtSparks Angle is a unique and refreshing read for art enthusiasts. It helped broaden my understanding of art and how it's a vital tool in the field of learning too. There is always something new to take away from each month's issue. Every perspective shared shed more light on how deep the significance of art goes in various spheres of life. I always look forward to reading the ArtSparks Angle every month!"*

**—Prisha Khanna, Elpro International School**

*"The ArtSparks Angle has been a lovely space to read about different ideas and approaches in arts education. I appreciate the effort and detail in each issue that brings balanced perspectives on relevant topics and inspiring field stories from across the country."*

**—Roshni, Nature Conservation Foundation**

*"The ArtSparks philosophy/approach resonates with my own teaching/learning and research interest, that is looking at a robust and interdisciplinary art program at K - 12. The issues are as relevant to me here as it is there, maybe because of similar colonial educational approaches evident in our present systems. The hands on approach in their workshop(s) helps me in understanding how to approach project based learning. The discussions at the end of a session to critique is actually where we all learn so much more and it is done so patiently and respectfully. Reinforces my own ethics in teaching and learning, validating my views and approach."*

**—Yasmeen Zahra Salman, AKU IED**

*"The ArtSparks' newsletter brings a breath of fresh air into my inbox that is crowded with disheartening news about the world today. Reading about the positive experiences of members of EdSparks Collective always inspires me and pushes me to consider new perspectives. Moreover, although I don't work with children or in education, I enjoy reading about art pedagogy since it broadens my perspectives and makes me question my biases about education. In all, the monthly newsletter is a refreshing read that I would highly recommend!"*

**—Swaathi Vetrivel, TU Delft**

*"It has broadened my perspective around art education. It has inspired me to write and reflect on every project we do."*

**—Ramya M Vaidyanath, Makkala Jagriti**

*"In the Artsparks Angle, I always look upto the section 'Story from the field', it helps me to understand how art education is practiced with children in different corners of the country. Each of the stories reflect learnings and experiences of the intervention with children. It has helped to broaden my perspective on visual arts and inspired me to include these ideas into our programs."*

**—Manasi Baishya, Ayang Trust**

*"I have been an ardent admirer of the work done by ArtSparks Foundation and inspired by their commitment to art education. The Artsparks Angle is a wonderful showcase of the work the ArtSparks' does and a great way to reach out to fans and followers like me. I especially like the feature that they do on their EdSparks cohort members. I also look forward to information on upcoming sessions and webinars they do for art educators and the community."*

**—Yazhini Ilanahi, Freelance Arts Facilitator**

## Upcoming Event

### ArtSpeaks Session



#### Fostering Social Emotional Learning Through Art

30th July 2021

4:30 pm - 5:30 pm (IST)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is essential to children's well-being. From effective problem-solving to self-discipline, from impulse control to emotion management and more, SEL provides a foundation for positive, long-term effects on children, adults, and communities.

Art can play an important role in developing these skills in children. Join us for an interactive discussion, where we explore the connections between art education and SEL.

To register for the session, please click here: <https://forms.gle/TPSsu4U1RW3Uv7pZ6>

#### Share Your Feedback



We'd love to hear from you,  
please click here: <https://forms.gle/oME3ZnpasJEYzvNQ6>

#### Read Previous Issues



To read our previous issues,  
please click here: <http://www.art-sparks.org/the-artsparks-angle.html>