

THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE



In This Issue

- 1 EdSparks Collective 2021-22
- 2 Spotlight: Story From the Field
- 3 Upcoming Event
-- Learning Circle

Welcome Message

We are happy to present the latest edition of **'The ArtSparks Angle'**, Professional Learning Program Newsletter. In this edition, catch a glimpse of the first half of the ArtSparks Foundation's professional development program, EdSparks Collective 2021-22: program overview, a few of the participants' reflections and artworks. We also have Dravina from Kanavu, a past EdSparks Collective participant, sharing her story of bringing transformative art education experiences to children in rural Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu.

EdSparks Collective 2021-22



"The arts, it has been said, cannot change the world, but they may change human beings who might change the world"

—Maxine Greene

Art can add tremendous value to children's learning, growth and development. Significant research points to this. EdSparks Collective is a one-of-a-kind, 12-session, professional development program for all those interested in exploring the full potential of the visual arts to transform student learning. Each interactive, hands-on workshop session is carefully designed to gradually build participants' understandings of, and capacity to design and implement, enriching educational interventions that utilize the visual arts to foster the development of 21st century learning and life skills in children.

The first half of the EdSparks Collective 2021-22 was conducted from Oct. 4 to Oct. 9th, 2021. Due to the ongoing pandemic situation, we decided to continue with online mode of the program. We had a vibrant and diverse group of educators and social sector players from across India.

The cohort comprised Founders of early stage NGOs, Executive Directors, Curriculum Developers, Project Managers, Visual Art Educators, School Teachers, Educators, Academic Advisors; to name a few.

Participants came from the following organizations:

- Better Education Lifestyle and Environment Foundation (BELIEF), Maharashtra
- FEATHERS, Tamil Nadu
- Gubbachi Learning Community, Karnataka
- Jhamtse Gatsal Children's Community, Arunachal Pradesh
- MAARGA, Karnataka
- Pragat Shikshan Sanstha, Maharashtra
- PRAYOG, Bihar
- RREA, Manipur
- Shiv Nadar School, Uttar Pradesh
- Simple Education Foundation, New Delhi
- SOPAN Trust, Maharashtra
- TeachFor North-East, Manipur
- Towards Future, West Bengal
- Unnati Institute for Social and Educational Change, Maharashtra
- Varitra foundation, Haryana

We engaged the participants in different sessions including robust teaching methodologies in art, stages of artistic development and exploring different art mediums such as oil pastels, collage, painting etc. The participants had an opportunity to experience every session through hands-on activities and understand how the unit is strategically designed to trigger the development of eight core 21st century learning and life skills in primary, upper primary and secondary aged children, namely: problem solving; flexible thinking; investigation; creative risk-taking; close observation; perseverance; collaboration; communication. Through these sessions, participants were given an overview of how a well-structured and carefully designed curriculum unravels gradually leading to deep and meaningful learning outcomes.

At the end of every session, the participants shared their reflections. Some of the responses included:

"Although I was aware that children need to enjoy the process of making art, learning about the stages of artistic development deepened my perspective about how the development happens across age groups."
- Consultant, Library program, UNNATI ISEC

"Art is not all about creating the perfect piece of artwork. It is about expressing our unique thoughts and ideas as an individual for the world to see and interpret in their own words. Each day, I used to start off feeling uncomfortable about the medium we were about to explore. Facilitation of the perfectly designed lessons was the key here. The ideas, thoughts and questioning. All of these really guided us to think through and come up with our own unique ideas which we were all surprised and proud of at the end of the day."

—Manager, Simple Education Foundation

"The sessions made me understand that art is not just a sketch, or a drawing that I have to make it beautiful or representative. It is more than that, it is about patience, problem solving, creativity, team work and much more. I was and still very insecure about showing my piece of work to others. It is important to let students know that this is not about showing how good of an artist you are but about how you can help students to achieve the above. I have also understood that first of all, we need to have a mindset that art is a very important lesson. It is as important as math or science if not more."

—Program Manager, TeachFor North-East



Spotlight: Story From the Field

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

Kanavu works with affordable private schools in rural Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu. In the last two years of our work these schools, we have enabled opportunities for exposure to art, however this project is the first formal intervention using visual arts. The students from grades 6 to 8 were chosen based on their interest and accessibility to school. The enthusiasm and engagement by students has been a key reason to ensure completion of this project despite two cyclones and children being displaced to shelter camps.

From Day 1, students showed utmost interest in engaging with art. Collage was an entirely new medium for all the students, hence they were very observant. In the first session, many students were confused about non-representational exploration and hence they ended up making representational structures. But when they were pushed, they deliberately tried a combination of abstract and real life explorations. Some students believed that they should do something 'perfect'. When they were encouraged to try non-representational explorations, they said, "*Miss, mudikala.*" (*Miss, I can't complete it*). However when they observed others and saw that I (facilitator) was appreciating the efforts rather than the end products, they started showing more

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enthusiasm towards exploring without rigid mindsets.

Students showed a lot of excitement and fascination while exploring 3D collage. The prompts given by me as a facilitator challenged students to think beyond and come up with their own unique ideas. During reflection many children said that this was a new experience for them. The story telling was one of my favorite sessions as I observed students collaborate and collectively come up with multiple plots for their stories.

This was my first time teaching art formally within a classroom setting. Hence, I was very curious to observe and learn from this experience. Going through the lesson plan and planning for material distribution & classroom spacing were very helpful for smooth uninterrupted flow of sessions. From my childhood days, I enjoyed art. However, I always believed there was one perfect end product. But through EdSparks Collective and ALP, I now truly believe that process is important than the product. This opportunity has been a big boost to imagine what it would mean to bring art education to all the 1200 children that we serve.



Upcoming Event

Learning Circle *(Only for EdSparks Cohort Members)*



Comic Book-Making: Language Development Through the Art **29th & 30th Oct. 2021**

We are happy to present the 8th Learning Circle with our EdSparks cohort members! The intent of the learning circle is to continuously build and share knowledge around art education with the cohort members through hands-on sessions and discussions.

Art can serve as a valuable tool to develop language and literacy skills in children. Through this comic book-making session, we delve into diverse possibilities of integrating the arts and language. Join us for an interactive and hands-on session on empowering and developing language skills in children through visual art!!

To register for the session, please click here: <https://forms.gle/i4mhkPfiWrqcGp4ZA>

"Education is not learning the facts, but the training of the mind to think." —Albert Einstein