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ARTSPARKS
CURIOSITY. CREATIVITY. LEARNING.

THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE

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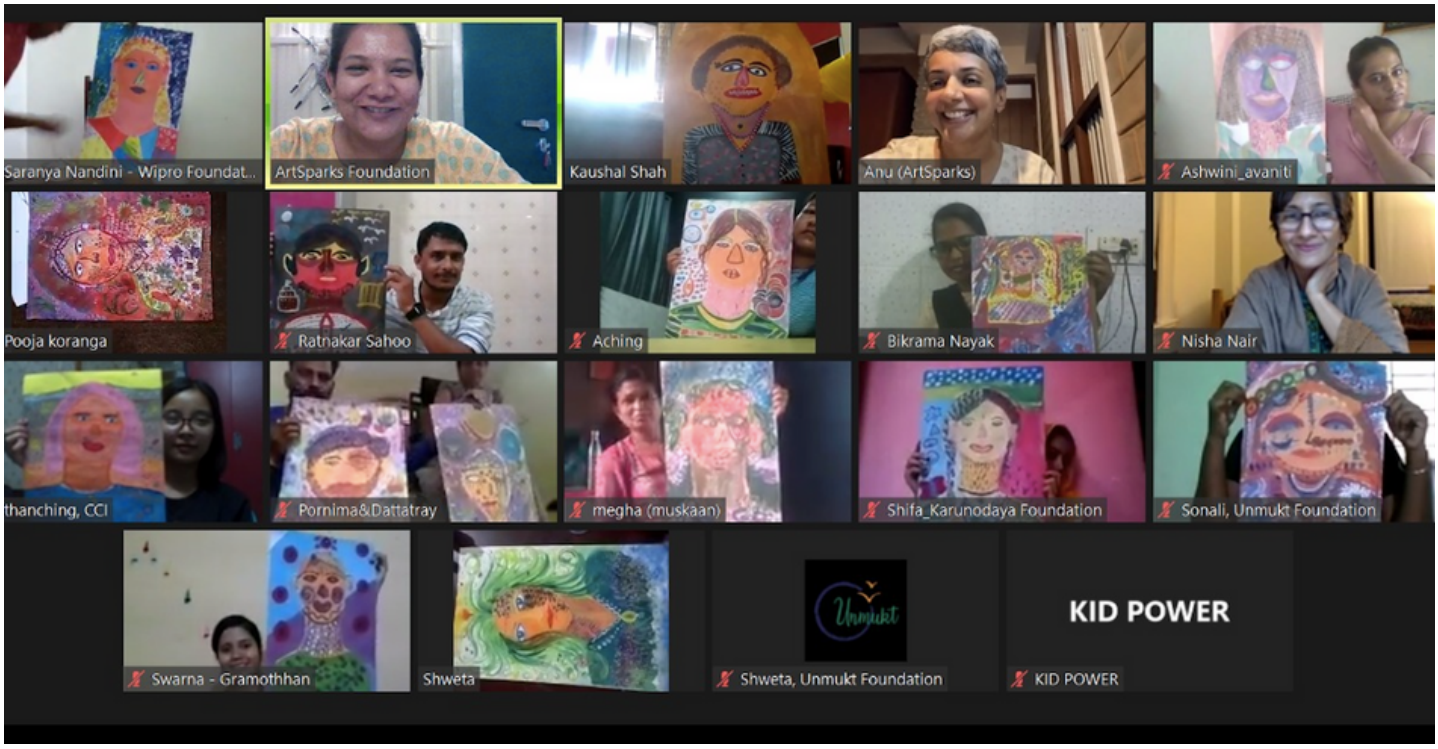
Welcome Message

We are happy to present the latest edition of *The ArtSparks Angle*, ArtSparks' Professional Learning and Development Program newsletter. In this edition we feature ArtSparks' EdSparks Collective 2022-23 cohort. We also have Pravina from Simple Education Foundation, a past EdSparks Collective participant, narrating her experiences of conducting art-based learning interventions with the children she works with.

EdSparks Collective 2022-23 I Phase 1



ArtSparks Foundation's EdSparks Collective is an annual professional development program for educators, attended by different organizations and individuals across India. The first phase of EdSparks Collective was conducted from Oct. 10th to 15th, 2022. This year, we had a vibrant and diverse group of educators and social sector players join us on this learning expedition. The diverse cohort comprised founders of NGOs; operational heads; teachers; teacher trainers; project managers from the following organizations:

- Mimaansa, Mumbai
- Kidpower India, Visakhapatnam
- Door Step School, Pune
- Aarohi, Haldwani
- Ashayen, Bhubaneswar
- Unmukt Foundation, Bhubaneswar
- Gramothhan, Sonepur
- Avaniti Education & Training Foundation, Dhamtari
- Muskan, Bhopal
- Karunodaya Foundation, Gaya
- Centre for Community Initiative, Churachandpur

We engaged the participants in a series of sessions. Through the sessions, participants were introduced to robust art teaching methodologies, stages of children's artistic development, effective teaching-learning practices, and more. Participants were also encouraged to revisit their current educational practices, unlearn and re-learn, all in an effort to become more reflective practitioners.

The participants had an opportunity to experience every session through hands-on projects and understand how curriculum units are strategically designed to trigger the development of core 21st century learning and life skill, namely, problem solving, flexible thinking, investigation, creative risk-taking, close observation, perseverance, collaboration and communication. Participants were provided with insights on 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:

"One of the key learnings was how meticulously planned and thought through any learning experience for children must be. Looking back at my teaching experience in a school environment, I realize how many wrong approaches we relied on to give children what were thought to be varied exposures--many of them were quite unstructured and possibly not developmentally appropriate. I believe going forward I will be able to put

in the effort to engage children in well-thought out, relevant learning."

"There was immense value in the hands-on experiences like confidence-building, believing in the process, understanding that everyone is unique, and deepening understanding on the facilitation processes."

"Each art medium has a certain quality to it. Different children may succeed with different materials and I believe they may also begin to identify closely with certain materials over the other. I believe if this is further explored it would give us a deeper understanding of the child. It gives them a variety to choose from and builds their confidence. I also think it would make them more mindful of each material and how to use it and that in itself is a great learning because eventually they would look at everything/everyone around them with the same care and sensitivity."

The participants have now moved onto the 2nd phase of the program - The Action Learning Project (ALP) Phase. In this phase we provide them with all the necessary resource materials and guidance needed for them to conduct a mini-project with a group of children with whom they work with or within their own communities. The ALP enables participants to test out what they've learned in the first phase of the program, thereby gaining practical experience. Feedback that we have received from our past participants indicates that the ALP plays a significant role in deepening their learnings, and building their confidence in executing the program in their respective spaces. Stay tuned to know more!

Spotlight: Story From the Field

It gives us great pleasure to showcase Pravina from Simple Education Foundation, our EdSparks Collective (2021-22) participant, in this section. This excerpt includes Pravina's experience of participating in EdSparks Collective and conducting the Action Learning Project (ALP) as part of the program. Through the ALP, our EdSparks participants get an opportunity to apply their learnings from the program into the field and thereby witness the practical implications of the program. In this particular ALP, ArtSparks Foundation provided Pravina with a curriculum especially designed for early childhood, based on the age-group that she was working with along with all the materials needed to conduct it. Through this project, she had to take children through a process of making an imaginary animal collage that brought out the development of various skills and attributes.

I conducted my *Action Learning Project* with four students. From the very first session, there was a lot of excitement and eagerness among the children to participate which interestingly continued throughout the project. They seemed to be fairly attentive and focused during the demo as well with a lot of active questioning.

In the beginning, they were very excited to see all the animal images and had lots to share about them. They were engaged even during the demo where they were able to share all the different shapes they could see. But when it came to drawing their favourite animal, there were a lot of similar reactions like, "*Yeh toh main nahi kar paungi*" *(I won't be able to do this.)* Initially some of them even refused to start drawing. Through consistent prompts and conversations, they eventually

"I could see a reflection of each child's individuality and character in their respective artwork. "

did manage to complete their animal figures within the allotted time.

In the next session, the excitement was back, where they were again tearing paper to make their favorite animal. Later they even shared how creation using paper was much easier than drawing. Paper gave them more control and confidence to be more creative. "*Paper se toh sab aasan ho gaya!*" (*with paper everything became easier*). Similarly, they also shared how creating shapes and wavy or zigzag cut-outs were easier to create through cutting compared to tearing.

There were several instances where I noticed changes and development in each child's approach towards different activities. Right from being reluctant to start something to becoming a proud participant showcasing their final art piece and also sharing about it. I noticed distinct growth in their attitudes after each session. As the facilitator, every child's journey was special for me with each of them having beautiful learning experiences. In the initial sessions, Samithi's (name changed) engagement especially during the demo was always low with little excitement to share or contribute with her ideas. She seemed to be struggling with her motor skills as well but never asked for help. With all the other children always looking around at each other's work

"....how beautifully different concepts of knowledge had been integrated and taught through a simple form of art."

for new ideas and inspiration, Srishti never bothered to. Lost in her small corner, she used to be fully immersed in her exploration of all the different ways in which she could tear, cut and experiment with paper. I also noticed that she preferred exploring with a single colour each time which made her work unique and she always stayed with her choice till the end. She surprised us towards the end of the session by being the first child to make her animal figure using big and small shapes. This was her moment of being an inspiration to others. This was also when I first witnessed a different side of her which also made me realize her learning style. She was an observant learner who wanted to take her time with things and was also very particular about certain details in her work. With some freedom of thought and space available along with specific techniques of exploration that were discovered along the process, Srishti started to open up and share more. She always had interesting insights to share about her work and experience. She enjoyed taking her time to add intricate details to her composition and loved to share the why behind it later.

Priya on the other hand was really fascinated by how she could make her animal figure using shapes. She shared how drawing using shapes helped her in making a face for her animal which in her earlier attempt, she was unable to do. During reflection time, she shared in detail how and where she used different shapes. "*Yahan pe dibba jaisa kat ke chipka diaa, phir yaha lamba se kat ke chipka dia, yahan gol se kat ke..*" It was also interesting to listen to all the imaginative stories she shared about her animal.

As the sessions progressed, it was amazing to see the change in their body language and approach towards the same materials as compared to the first session. Along with familiarity came confidence to explore further with their creative ideas. I could see a reflection of each child's individuality and character in their respective artwork.

The access and exposure to different mediums and materials in the first phase of the EdSparks Collective program played a key role in steering me through the entire project. All the sharing and discussions we had about - what, when and how to address certain challenges came alive for me. The joy of teaching through art was magical. Some sessions, I had other fellow teachers observe the sessions who appreciated how beautifully different concepts of knowledge had been integrated and taught through a simple form of art. They were able to see how all new learnings can be connected to old learnings through questioning and conversations with children.

Ever since the first phase of the workshop, I have been exploring and experimenting with different mediums of art for myself. Since most of us come from a world where art had to be perfect and had to be done in a certain way, I never gave myself the option to explore other mediums that I was not very confident about. I followed and practiced a similar approach for my students as well. Pushing them continuously towards achieving a perfect goal. Giving them the perfect reference image to learn from and many other similar examples. "Happy Accidents" - is what stayed with me from the last EdSparks Collective workshop. With these two words in my head, I slowly found the courage to explore mediums and have been quite surprised by my capabilities as well.

EdSparks Collective's Action Learning Project made me understand the value of the process over product. After every demo, the children would jump into their paper exploration without caring about how it would look in the end. In an open space with no fixed expectations of outcomes, their creativity was limitless.

Upcoming Events

ArtSpeaks #16 - Build a Story

Date: 3rd & 4th December 2022
Venue: The Lalit Ashok, Kumarakrupa Rd, High Grounds, Bengaluru
Entry: Free

We are so excited to be a part of the Bangalore Literature Festival this year! The festival celebrates the creative spirit of the city and commemorates the literary diversity it offers. Join us at Bengaluru city's flagship annual literary and cultural experience focused on rekindling connections with literature and fostering reading and writing, especially amongst the young population. The connection between art and literacy is profound with the possibilities it creates for storytelling. You can also grab a copy of *ArtSparks: Ideas. Methods. Process* at the venue, written by Nisha Nair, the Founder and Executive Director of ArtSparks Foundation.

Register for the event here: http://bangaloreliteraturefestival.org/year-2022/register/

"Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere."
—Albert Einstein