

# THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE



## In This Issue

- 1 Robust Teaching Methodologies in the Visual Arts
- 2 Spotlight: Story from the Field
- 3 Upcoming Event  
-- ArtSpeaks Session

## Welcome Message

We are happy to present the fifth edition of **'The ArtSparks Angle'**, Professional Learning Program Newsletter. In this edition, we discuss the existing approaches in teaching visual arts in a classroom and explore more robust teaching methodologies in the visual arts. We also have Maria Leena, one of our EdSparks Collective cohort members, reflecting on her experiences on conducting art-based interventions with children.

## Robust Teaching Methodologies in the Visual Arts



Let me take you to an art classroom. We can see that the teacher is drawing a beautiful scenery on the blackboard and is asking students to create the same drawing in their book. The children are trying their best to replicate the exact drawing of the teacher. If the child is able to copy the exact same picture as the teacher, he or she is appreciated and given high marks while the child who is unable to copy the teacher's drawing is often told that she or he is not good in art and cannot be a good artist. This is the most common approach that is usually seen in a classroom for teaching the art to children. Before we dissect this approach, let us discuss a couple of more teaching approaches that are generally adopted in art classes.

Another approach is the formulaic approach, wherein the teacher gives step-by-step instructions on how to create an artwork and the children are expected to follow the exact steps and end up with a pre-defined output. The major problem with the above mentioned approaches is that the learning here is teacher directed rather than child- and learner-centered. And when the teacher becomes the focal point of learning, the children instead of exercising their knowledge and skills will merely try to imitate what the teacher has done. And if they are unable to meet the teacher's expectations, they become frustrated and ultimately gives up. Also, the first two approaches insist that there is only one way to create art, which leaves no room for children's ideas and imagination to flourish.



The third approach, which is often considered as an unconventional approach, is the unstructured approach, wherein the teacher gives the art materials to the child and asks the child to make whatever he or she wants without articulating any specific objectives. In the third approach, even though the child is given the freedom to do whatever he or she wants; since there are no specific goals or challenges presented to the child, he or she often may not utilize their potential to the fullest extent.

Then, how should the visual arts be taught in the art classroom? What is a better approach to teaching the visual arts? Here are some of the characteristics of a robust approach to teaching the visual arts:

- The focus is on the **process of the learning**
- Child's ability to **express** his or her **ideas** and **make choices of own** has improved as a result of their engagement
- Children have **persisted through challenges** and found their own solutions
- Children have been encouraged to **experiment** and **take appropriate risks**
- **Invention** is encouraged through a safe environment in which the unexpected is welcome and utilized as a source of ideas; **multiple solutions** and interpretations are valued

## Spotlight: Story from the Field

*It gives us great pleasure to showcase Maria Leena, past EdSparks Collective (2019-20) participant, in this section. This excerpt is pulled from Maria Leena's Action Learning Project (ALP) case study submitted as part of her participation in EdSparks Collective.*

My teaching profession requires me to regularly update my knowledge, in order to match the growing, diverse interests of my students. In 2019, I was invited to attend the EdSparks Collective Program. After attending the program, I gained knowledge on 21st century learning & life skills, literacy and language development through art. Through the program, I realized that as an educator it is my responsibility to provide enough opportunities for students to develop their life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, creative risk taking and collaborative learning. These skills will empower the students to succeed and meet the needs of today's digital and interconnected world.

For the Action Learning Project, students were required to create a 3D collage, with the theme – 'My Future Community'. The students were very realistic in their approach. They first identified the existing infrastructure within the community like road, shops and houses. Then, they started to identify the missing opportunities for the community like having clean and healthy air, old age homes, orphanages, swimming pool and parks for children to play. They wanted to introduce a new culture of using modern technology

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to meet the needs of the community and drive future success.

In terms of engagement, students were filled with excitement and curiosity throughout the project. They waited patiently until they got access to the art materials. Unlike in regular classrooms, the students listened carefully to the prompts provided by the facilitator and followed it. As the students began to engage themselves in the project, they realized that the contribution and ideas of each member in the group is important. They changed their perception – from being judged to being more open to share their ideas with each other. Through this project, they learned how to approach their objectives in a more collaborative way.

The students worked together and created a new world with fresh perspectives and ideas.



## Upcoming Event

### ArtSpeaks Session



#### Language Development Through the Art

19th Dec. 2020

2:00 pm - 4:30 pm (IST)

Art can serve as a valuable tool to develop language and literacy skills in children. Through this 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!!

#### Guest Appearance:



#### **Ruchi Dhona, Founder, Let's Open a Book**

Let's Open a Book is a not-for-profit initiative focused on cultivating reading habits among children of Spiti Valley, a remote sub-district of Himachal Pradesh. Working at the grassroots level, her organization has set up 60 reading corners in government primary schools and is leading efforts to revive the public library in Kaza, Spiti Valley. She has worked for over 7 years with consulting firms like Bain & Company and AT Kearney across strategy, research and knowledge management domains. She did her graduation from St.Xavier's College, Kolkata in English literature and Masters in Business Administration from IMI, New Delhi.

To register for the session, please click here: <https://forms.gle/SsW1wkVTDBEaHq1E8>

*"The arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world" —Elliot Eisner*