

THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE



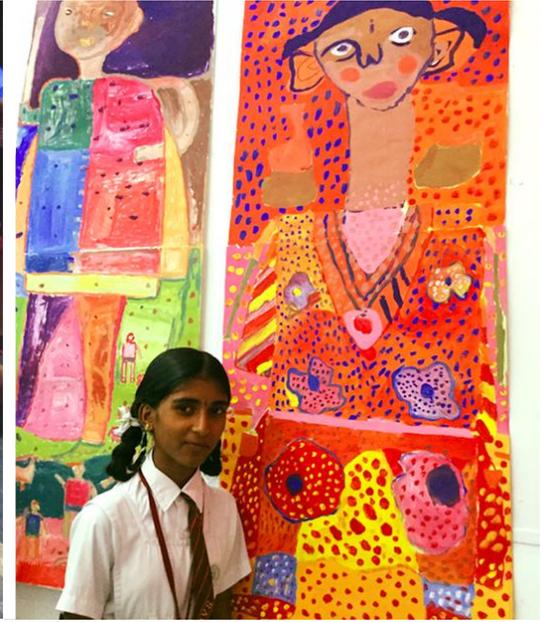
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Welcome Message

We are happy to present the latest edition of **'The ArtSparks Angle'**, Professional Learning Program Newsletter. In this edition, we introduce you to some of the interesting ideas shared by Maxine Greene, a powerful voice in art education. We also have Ramya and Vidya from Makkala Jagriti, our EdSparks Collective cohort members, narrating their experience of incorporating new learnings from the EdSparks Collective in the recent workshop conducted with their facilitators.

Art & Social Imagination



Maxine Greene was an American educational philosopher, author, social activist, and teacher. She was a powerful voice in educational philosophy who made powerful arguments in favour of all of the arts (visual, performing, literary, etc.). Throughout her life, she advocated for the importance and role of arts in children's lives and minds.

In one of her essays, 'Releasing the Imagination', she makes a strong case for the argument that the arts instill our capacity to imagine possibilities beyond the here and now and allow us to construct alternate worlds. According to her, without imagination, we lose the ability to question our realities and enter alternate realities, to bring an 'as if' into being and to look at things as if they could be otherwise. According to her, informed engagement with the arts would be most likely to release the imaginative capacity in children.

This requires conscious efforts from the teacher to mindfully develop meaningful learning experiences which can foster imagination and curiosity in children. But most often what we see in art classes is, children trying to copy well-known artists works or simply creating feel good products by following a series of rote steps. These activities are didactic in nature and limit the child's capacity to think, reflect and imagine.

Another interesting concept introduced by Maxine Greene is called Social Imagination. According to

Greene, *"Social imagination is the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficit society, in the streets where we live and our schools. Social imagination not only suggests but also requires that one take action to repair or renew."* She further goes on to say that, by taking action she is not asking the people to break windows because that does no good. Instead, she wants people to talk about the problems they perceive and articulate their opinions about the same.

Another concept that is deeply connected with Social Imagination, is wide-awakeness. It means that people should be aware of their surroundings and try to critically understand the different aspects of the problems that they face and be equipped to pose meaningful questions and potentially enact change. She offers to us the importance and power of arts in awakening the potential of the social imagination. Art embraces plurality and offers multiple ways of seeing things. Art often helps us to say what words sometimes cannot say. Art has the transformative power to transform human mind and lives, which in turn can change the world.

Making meaningful art encourages children to think critically as well as creatively about themselves and the world around them. Art opens us up to the idea that possibilities exist beyond what we see in front of us and empowers us to envision a different future.

Spotlight: Story From the Field

It gives us great pleasure to showcase Ramya and Vidya from Makkala Jagriti, past EdSparks Collective (2020-21) participants, in this section. This excerpt highlights the efforts taken by Ramya and Vidya to incorporate new learnings from the EdSparks Collective in conducting a workshop with facilitators and developing a robust art program.

Makkala Jagriti is an NGO working since 2003 for the holistic development of children from poor and marginalised communities and sets up learning centres in urban poor communities. The SPICE model that we follow at Makkala Jagriti cater to physical, social, intellectual, creative and emotional development in children. The learnings from Edsparks Collective is helping us to fill the gaps while we implement our programs using SPICE model.

With the new learnings and understandings from EdSparks Collective, we are developing a robust art program. In the initial phase, we are conducting a pilot study at three schools, one community centre and one observation home for girls and boys. As a part of capacity building and training, we recently conducted a workshop with our 12 facilitators to build their understanding around art education and robust teaching methodology in the visual arts.

This four-day workshop with the facilitators helped us further strengthen our belief in the power of art. Material investigations, scaffolding, feedback, reflections, sequential learning, and participatory demonstrations—we've come to realise that all of these are highly essential in enriching children's

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learning in the coming years. It was fascinating to see each facilitator working on improving their own skills and at the same time also learning life skills relevant in the 21st century.

During debrief sessions, the facilitators shared their learnings and reflections from the workshop. Some of the key learnings/takeaways from the workshop were:

- Facilitators understood the power of material investigation and inquiry-based approach to open up children's mind and foster their imagination
- Facilitators learnt that art gives a voice to the children and through art children can develop their sense of individuality
- Facilitators appreciated the importance of reflection, diving deeper and connecting to their own experiences and teaching practices

We were pleased to see everyone being so involved and deeply engaged in the workshop. This is because art is, after all, such a powerful medium whose uniqueness cannot be resisted easily. The facilitators shared that this art workshop is different from any other workshops conducted so far and is excited to integrate robust art interventions with SPICE model.



Upcoming Event

ArtSpeaks Session



Art & Social Change: Exploring the transformative power of art

26th March 2021

4:30 pm - 6:00 pm (IST)

Art in social change has multiple aspects. Art gives voice to the marginalised voices; Art creates a space to bring people together and have meaningful conversations and dialogues; Art embraces plurality and multiple perspectives; Art empowers people to envision solutions and possibilities and so on.

Join us for an interactive discussion where we explore the transformative power of art. We will be joined by a guest speaker for the session.

To register for the session, please click here: <https://forms.gle/FJZcvrHfHpeVSqDN6>

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."

—Albert Einstein