

# THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE



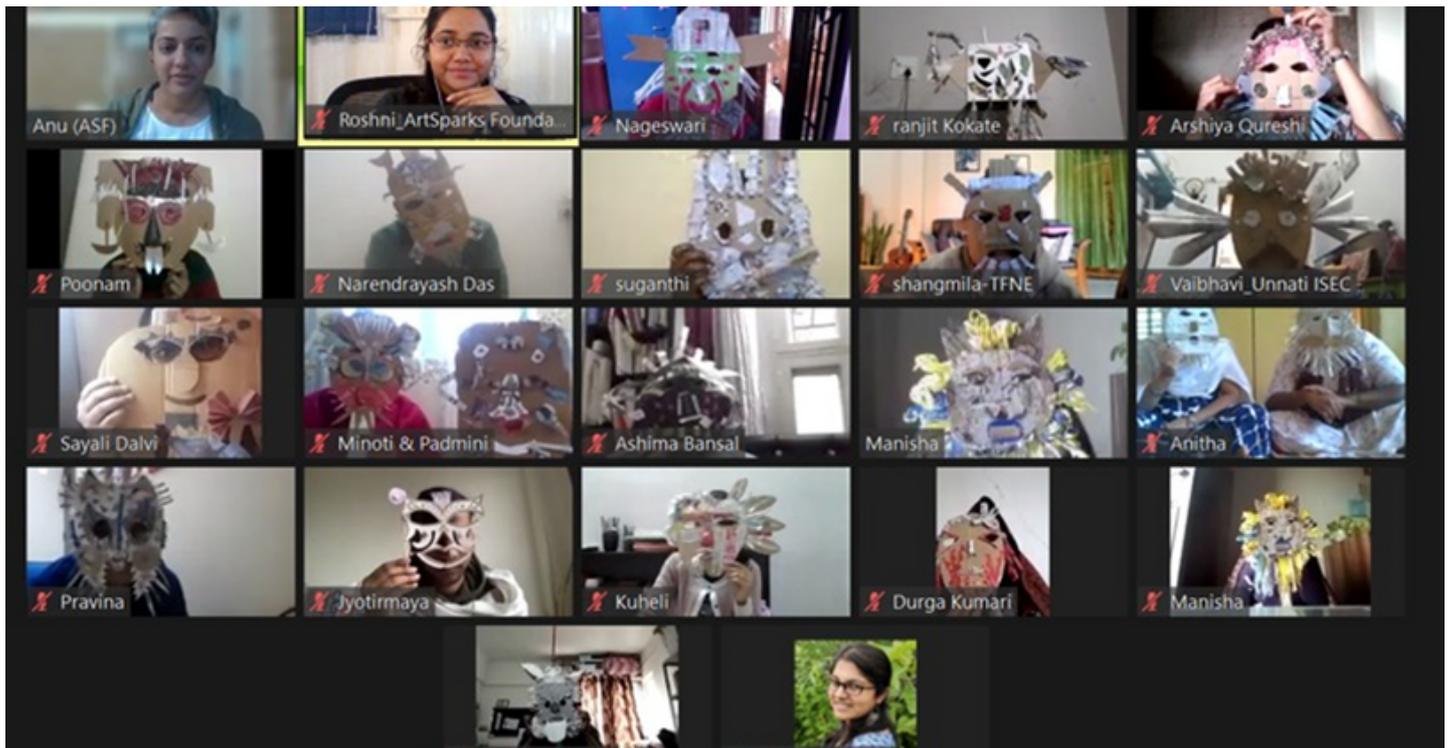
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## Welcome Message

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 2021-22 cohort. We also have Kuheli from Towards Future, a past EdSparks Collective participant, narrating her experiences on conducting art-based learning interventions with the children in her space.

## Highlights: EdSparks Collective 2021-22



Children are born natural explorers. They are curious to know and learn about the world around them through their own senses. But as children enter the formal education system that curiosity and eagerness to know new things slowly fades away. A child, full of questions about things that interests him, ceases to question at school. A child whose imagination knows no bounds, stops thinking and imagining on her own. A child who is always coming up with new ideas, stops trying new things due to the fear of failure or making mistakes. As educators it is important for us to take pause, think and reflect on what are some of the contributing factors that cause these inhibitions in our children. It's time to usher a change to the way teaching and learning are perceived. Children need to be curious, critical thinkers, imaginative doers, creative problem-solvers, unafraid of making mistakes, empathetic to self and others, and much more. And, it is imperative for education systems to nurture these capabilities in children. This is where the visual arts can play a contributing role.

At ArtSparks Foundation, we work to elevate the position of the visual arts by building wider and deeper understandings amongst members of society, and particularly members of the education and development ecosystem, about the role of visual art in education. In our endeavor to provide rich and meaningful visual art experiences to all

children, with the support of Wipro Foundation, we engage with educators across India through our professional learning and development program, EdSparks Collective. Through this program we answer questions about why education should include and raise the position of the visual arts and what children can learn and achieve through the visual arts. EdSparks Collective provides a safe space to address and challenge our beliefs around art that may get in the way of implementing meaningful and educationally relevant art programs. The program calls upon educators to reflect on and reshape existing teaching and learning practices and apply the insights gained in a wide variety of spaces and subjects. The program is designed to enable you to experience the learning interventions as children would, and later reflect, as adults, on the educational implications of the interventions. Our past participants have included those with different art experiences as well as those with no prior art experiences at all. Each and every one of them have had their own special takeaways from the program, whether it is understanding how to meet their students' needs better or how to work with children keeping their developmental trajectories in mind, and so much more.

The program consists of full day workshops that are highly interactive and hands-on, where participants are involved in making art, thinking through it,



experiencing it as well as experiencing the facilitation of it. Each one of the sessions are very carefully designed so that the participants are able to take these back to their spaces to meet their own goals in a much more meaningful and powerful manner. The program is versatile as the participants are able to adapt it to their own spaces in amazing ways. Through this program participants develop the capacity to build their own art-based programs, where they can integrate the arts to help them reach their goals.

By being a part of the program, our participants have a good grasp of multiple art mediums, are able to design an art-based program, have developed reflective teaching and learning practices and are also provided with advice and support that extends well beyond these 12 sessions as they have now become a part of a community of practice. Here are some insights that participants shared, rooted in their overall experience and learnings from the program:

*"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. 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."*

—Pravina, 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, teamwork and much more. 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."*

—Shangmila, RREA

## Spotlight: Story From the Field

*It gives us great pleasure to showcase Kuheli, a library educator from Towards Future, our EdSparks Collective (2021-22) participant, in this section. ArtSparks' EdSparks Collective is an annual professional development program attended by different organizations and individuals across India. This excerpt includes Kuheli'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, they 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 students of grade 3 and 4 who come from a marginalized minority community. At the beginning the students were very hesitant to talk, they had to be constantly reminded that there were no wrong or right answers, and they could say whatever they felt like. Constantly reinforcing the fact that there is no one to judge them, helped a lot in the long run when they started to show more interest in sharing about their work and the process that they were engaging in. Initially they did not want to comment or talk about each other's work, but over the sessions they started observing what others were doing and reflected on that as well.

*Fostering Imagination:* Over time they wanted to explore more and more and this led them to make more than one layout for their imaginary animal. During the same session, they were not even asked to share what their animals could do, but they shared

***"It is through such a process that children are given opportunities to pause, reflect, find solutions and articulate at the same time."***

what super powers their imaginary animals had. The children confidently shared what powers the imaginary animals that their friends drew had too.

*Experimentation, Discovery & Sharing of Ideas:* During the exploration and arrangement of the pieces of paper, it was observed that children were trying to be representational in terms of shapes for example they were cutting flowers and trees. They were also only using scissors and reluctant to use hands to tear and make shapes. In order to encourage tearing, scissors were taken away from the children after a certain point of time. It was noticed that one of the children, Saniya, made the cut paper stand and gave it a 3-dimensional shape. As children were encouraged to look into each other's work, others looked at the 3-dimensional arrangement made by Saniya and tried to make their own shapes which some of them later used in their final imaginary animals' collage as well.

*Mathematical concepts:* Suma had a problem where she could not perceive and draw in proportion to the length of the legs of the animal she was drawing. She was asked to think how she can measure the length without a scale? She after thinking for some time, used her fingers to measure the length of the leg and made an estimate of how long it should be in her drawing. She was encouraged to share the way she solved her problem with others in the group.





***"...to realize that the product or the final artwork that they did was not important but the learning happening through the session was more important."***

**Communication & Collaboration:** Over time they gained the confidence to speak, share their ideas, share their feelings and processes they were discovering, shared suggestions with each other about what else they could do. This is a great way to open them up and create an opportunity for them to freely express themselves.

**Language & Literacy:** During the last session it was observed that the children were very eager to talk about their imaginary animals, the special powers they had and also put them in a story. During their story making time they had a lot of discussion, going back and forth, debating about what the storyline should be like. The way they expressed themselves in the first session and the way they engaged in the discussion in the last session was very different.

**Teaching Practice:** During the first session when Rihanna was struggling with her observational drawing, I instinctively took the pencil and drew the lines for her only to realize that it was not to be done. During the successive session when such situations arose, I corrected my course of action by either

carrying a paper and demonstrating the process to the child and also by guiding the child through open ended questions in a step-by-step fashion. At times I had to step back and think about how I would articulate the steps and only pose open ended questions so that the children found the solutions by themselves. In this way I developed an understanding of how questions are to be framed to guide children and the importance of interaction with the children throughout the process. It is through such a process that children are given opportunities to pause, reflect, find solutions and articulate at the same time.

Finally, the most important learning from the project has been that the children should be given opportunities and freedom to do things in their own way so that each of their explorations and final products will be unique. The constant reinforcement of not being wrong or right gave the children the confidence to try out new things, take up challenges, explore more and put more details in their artwork. Sharing positive feedback with the children at every step enabled them to realize that the product or the final artwork that they did was not important but the learning happening through the session was more important.

## Upcoming Events

### EdSparks Collective Introductory Overview Session



**Date:** 20th August 2022, Saturday  
**Time:** 10:00am - 11:30am (IST)  
**Venue:** Zoom

Curious about the role art can play in enriching children's learning? Look no further! By signing up for EdSparks Collective (2022-23), and experiencing these valuable sessions, you will get the opportunity to explore the full potential of visual art in enhancing children's learning and development. Join us for an orientation session, where we will give you all the information you need to be a part of the EdSparks Collective program.

To know more, please click here: <http://www.art-sparks.org/edsparks-collective.html>

If interested, let us know: <https://forms.gle/4EbGiUXiqHDREVqa6>

*"Art is an irreplaceable way of understanding and expressing the world."*

—Dana Gioia