

THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE



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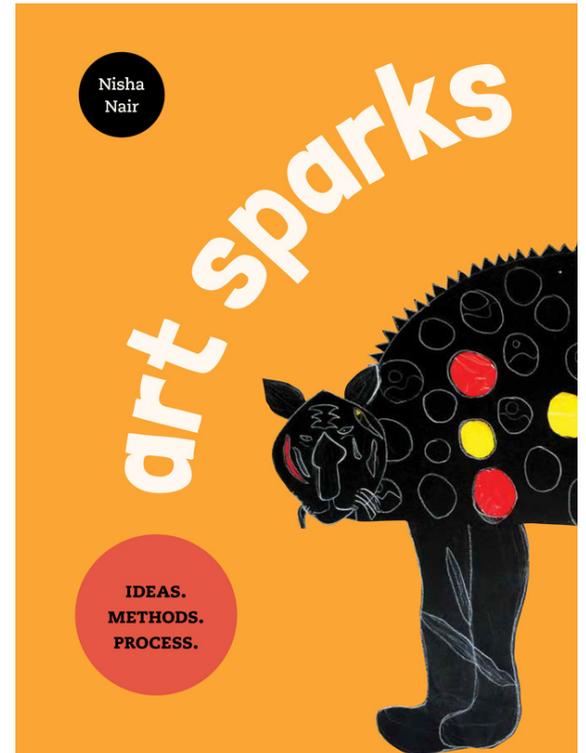
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Welcome Message

We are happy to present the latest edition of *The ArtSparks Angle*, ArtSparks' Professional Learning and Development Program newsletter. In this edition we provide highlights from the Book Talk on '*ArtSparks: Ideas. Methods. Process*'. We also have Ashima from Shiv Nadar School, a past EdSparks Collective participant, narrating her experiences on conducting art-based learning interventions with the children in her space.

Book Talk on *ArtSparks: Ideas. Methods. Process*



'*Art Sparks: Ideas. Methods. Process.*' is written by Nisha Nair, the Founder and Executive Director of ArtSparks Foundation. Nisha's work in art education spans over 18 years in varied settings in the US and in India. Here is a write-up about the book, based on the messages shared by the author herself during the event that took place at Champaca Bookstore, Library and Cafe.

The book was written in response to some of the author's personal experiences around art and education and the relationship between the two. One was the recognition that the **arts has so much intrinsic value and much to offer**. However, there is a lack of importance that is given to it within the education context, whether it is schools or any other learning environments, where art is either not provided in its full form or is provided only for a few students.

There was also this recognition that **the way we talk about art, in the context of education is actually contributing to its marginalization**. Often times, we hear the word '*fun*' being attributed to the arts. When we think about education as a serious endeavor and when we use these terms to describe art, there is a certain diminishing of the arts. It is seen as something that you do if you have some spare time. Another term

that we often hear is when the arts is spoken as '*non-cognitive*'. The very idea that something can be done without any thought or cognition, is also problematic. There is nothing we do without thinking. '*Talent*' is another word that is associated with art. The notion that only the talented few or those who have an inclination towards art, should pursue the arts versus all children getting access to it. These recognitions helped identify what is interrupting the ability for the arts to be maximized within the education system.

The book was written in response to these recognitions - **how can we change the narrative around art in education**. How can we talk about it differently in the way that is evidence and research-based, so that it gives legitimacy and is based on real situations. The book seeks to contextualize it from an Indian perspective, based on a real situation that is rooted within the country. It chronicles the journey of a group of students from a village school in Kolar district, who are first generation school-goers. The book gives us a sense and understanding of how this kind of methodology impacts this group of children and therefore **why it is important for us to embed art in a school or an educational environment**.

Particular messages that this book tries to put forth include the **process-oriented approach to art-making as opposed to a product-oriented**

approach. Historically, when art was brought into the school systems, it was about creating a product. Till date, it is driven by the desire to create something beautiful. This causes the belief that only those who have talent and have the required interest will be able to perform well. How we assess the arts is also rooted in a product-orientation approach. When a child shows their final work, its either good or bad. This creates a dichotomy in the minds of children between '*I can do this*' and '*I can't do that*'.

The book and ArtSparks Foundation works towards changing that orientation to a more process-based approach. **There are a number of skills and attitudes that develop in children through engagement in the arts.** This means that through the process of creating a final art piece, you have to do a number of different things. For example, children conduct different experiments with the materials to test the properties of the materials. They ideate, brainstorm and conceptualize. If they are thinking about a particular topic, they embark on coming up with multiple solutions before settling on one idea. They learn how to integrate diverse ideas. They collaborate with their group in a classroom setting. They learn to take other's perspectives into account and integrate it into their own work. They learn to assert their own perspectives, to stay strong about what their ideas are and what they are wishing to convey and so much more. These skills should be fostered early on so it becomes habit-forming.

At ArtSparks foundation, we talk about these skills as 21st century learning and life skills. Today's day and age is a highly complex one. Challenges come up from all corners and our ability to navigate these challenges, think on our feet, problem-solve, test out solutions, innovate - have become extremely important.

Another message that the book has is that art is for

all children and every child can benefit from it. We need to move away from this misconception that this is an extra-curricular subject that you can choose. Everyone needs it. Just like every child studies science, the arts should be incorporated into the school day and not as an afterthought.

What makes this book different, is that you hear the voice of the children. The book includes the conversations between the facilitator and the children. You also get to read questions that the children were asking and the thought process behind them.

Last but not the least, it is also written in a way that can become actionable for others, it provides guidelines and a framework within which anyone can approach it. A parent can consider using it when they are thinking about engaging their children in deeper forms of learning or an educator can take it back to their educational spaces as well.



To grab your copy of the book, please visit Tara books website: <https://tarabooks.com/shop/art-sparks/>

Spotlight: Story From the Field

It gives us great pleasure to showcase Ashima, a teacher from Shiv Nadar School, 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 Ashima'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 in their spaces and thereby witness the practical implications of the program. In this particular ALP, the participants had to take their group of children through a process of art-making to develop skills and attitudes like close observation, investigation, communication and much more.

I conducted my *Action Learning Project* with students of grade 3 and 4. The children were quite curious and looked forward to the upcoming sessions with great excitement. Since they could not use an eraser, they were asked to draw without much pressure to avoid dark lines. It was challenging in the beginning, but gradually with practice, they were able to draw.

During the sessions, there were many occasions where I noticed changes in skills and attitudes of the students. However, for me the most complex and interesting journey was of a child named Aamna (*name changed*). She is an inquisitive child who loves to ask questions and has a different perspective on things. In one of the sessions, she found it quite difficult to break away from her way of thinking and to try something new. In the first session, when children were asked to make animal figures using shapes, Aamna decided to draw a peacock. After some trials, she concluded that she couldn't draw it well without using an eraser. However, after observing the drawing of other students in the class and with encouragement from the teacher, she tried again and was successful. After several attempts, she was able to achieve her goal of completing her drawing, using shapes without an eraser.

One of the students, Shrey (*name changed*), was quite hesitant to open up during the sessions. In the beginning, he spoke less and had a blank look.

"It created a lot of curiosity in my students as they never tried these things before in an art class. "

However, towards the last session he showed great interest and was much more comfortable with me and his peers in the class. He started to participate more, which showed how much he was enjoying the session. In some of the sessions, the students were given the opportunity to observe each other's work and give constructive feedback as well. This strategy of giving peer feedback helped the children to know their strengths and areas of improvement.

As a facilitator, me and my students were super excited to start this journey and try our hands at a new art form. The opportunity to allow students to imagine and observe details in an animal picture, was something I found quite stimulating for my students. Also, it created a lot of curiosity in my students as they never tried these things before in an art class.

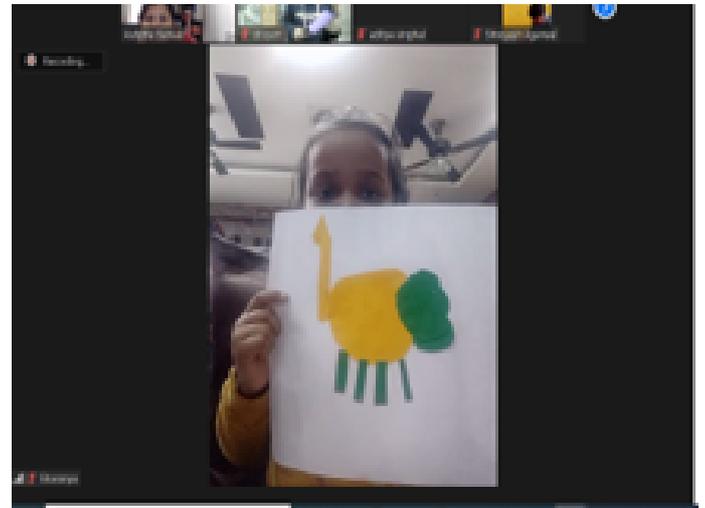
Before initiating the session, I had inhibitions on how my students might respond to this kind of a process. But as the sessions went by, with each lesson plan, I became more confident of the strategies being used and their execution in class. The biggest discovery I found was that the students not only enjoyed the sessions but also brainstormed and explored each material incorporating their thinking skills. It was wonderful to see that by the end of the session the learners were able to showcase and share their imaginary animal along with a name and a story that they wrote themselves!

Gradually step wise as we moved further with each lesson plan, I started to understand how I have used a robust art-based approach. Art is not only a product driven approach or just copying a work of art; on the contrary, it is an approach where the process matters a lot. It allows the learners to apply their imagination and creativity along with brainstorming on their research and develop observation skills.

Topic _____ Date _____

Grotto

Once there was a animal named Grotto. He lived alone for many years. Nobody likes him. They say that he is too big but Grotto tries to stay happy. One day when Grotto was outside he saw others bullying someone and he was strong so he got there to help and he helped the new visitor. The visitor asked what is your name. Grotto said "my name is Grotto" what is yours? Grotto asked oh! my name, my name is Bugle. why did you come here Grotto asked. I came to see how is your village Bugle replied. So you have come to stay here. Grotto asked Bugle said yes and this village looks nice. Grotto was happy and soon Grotto and Bugle became best friends and Grotto was not lonely. Grotto lived happily ever after.



Upcoming Events

EdSparks Collective 2022 (Part 1)



Date: Monday, 10th Oct. to Saturday, 15th Oct. 2022

EdSparks Collective consists of full day workshops, each day having different agendas. Part 1 is the first 6 of 12 sessions which essentially have a lot of hands-on experience with a variety of art materials. Participants will get familiar with these different art mediums, how certain units are developed using these art materials, what it can do to a learning space, how children relate to it and much more. They will also be learning about the various developmental stages of children, age-appropriate art-based interventions along with different learning styles!

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

"There is no depth to education without art"

—Amiri Baraka