

# 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 provide highlights from the Regional Meet held at Bhubaneswar, Odisha with our partner organizations. We also have Narendrayash from Varitra Foundation, a past EdSparks Collective participant, narrating his experiences of conducting art-based learning interventions with the children in his space.

## Regional Meet - Bhubaneswar, Odisha



Educational non-profit organizations across India are constantly engaged in inspiring work, re- envisioning teaching and learning in their quest to better the learning and development outcomes for the children they serve. Having supporters along the way to support their vision and goals becomes so important and valuable. Allies can serve to understand, collaborate, and thus support and bolster efforts. Allies can also help them pause and reflect on what is working well and also recognize the practices that can be reviewed and reformed. This has been the motive behind the Professional Learning and Development Regional Meets that ArtSparks organizes.

The Regional Meet at Bhubaneswar, Odisha was organized by ArtSparks Foundation with support from Wipro Foundation from 15th to 17th Nov. 2022, to be able to support EdSparks Collective participants and the non-profit organizations they represent further beyond the online support offered. The organizations from the different cohorts included:

- Unmukt Foundation, Bhubaneswar
- Ashayen, Bhubaneswar
- Chale Chalo, Bhubaneswar
- Gramothhan, Sonapur
- Patang, Sambalpur

The regional meet was planned during the Action Learning Project (ALP), i.e, the second phase of the EdSparks Collective Program where the current participants are getting an opportunity to apply their learnings from the program into the field and thereby witness the practical implications of the program. ALP Observational visits were conducted by the ArtSparks team to help provide support to the participants in real time and provide suggestions and feedback specific to their organization's and their children's needs.

One of the workshops conducted was to create an opportunity for current and past EdSparks cohort members in the region to come together and interact with one another with ArtSparks representatives organizing and overseeing the meet as ArtSparks intends to build a strong community of reflective practitioners who believe in the power of art and the possibilities of art in education. Workshops were also conducted for the organizations to support EdSparks participants to build understanding on implementing meaningful art- based programs among their team members.

The meet aided the ArtSparks team to understand the diversity that the participant organizations bring forth and their specific goals, needs and the demographics they serve. According to the cohort members, the ALP



observation visits and workshops empowered them to be aware of, take charge of and reflect on their own learning journeys.

*"The ArtSparks team made me realize how the children can develop focus and concentration when I use a robust approach for art interventions. I can use these sessions more often to build our children's capacity to focus and pay attention for longer periods of time." - Sonali, Center Coordinator, Unmukt Foundation. (Current EdSparks participant).*

*"We used to constantly think about how we can keep the students interested in our art classes as they would easily give up and leave the class without completing their artwork. What we saw today was something completely new where every child came up with their own wonderfully unique*

*ideas and were equally successful in their own way." - Art teacher, Volunteer, Unmukt Foundation.*

*"Sometimes my adult mind would come in and think of my creations in a good or bad way, but the way the workshop was facilitated and with the constant support given by the facilitators from ArtSparks, I was encouraged to move on from those thoughts and try out new things which felt liberating. I am eager to see how we can take this further with the children that we work with." - Ramajaranjan, Program Officer, Chale Chalo.*

The regional meet helped in getting an in-depth understanding of the partner organizations and the work they do which will allow ArtSparks to support them better along the way to do the best for the children we all seek to serve.

## Spotlight: Story From the Field

*It gives us great pleasure to showcase Narendrayash from Varitra Foundation that work towards empowering children, youth and communities to shape their futures in a fair and inclusive manner, who was our EdSparks Collective (2021-22) participant, in this section. This excerpt includes Narendrayash's experience of participating in EdSparks Collective and conducting the Action Learning Project (ALP) as part of the program. In this particular ALP, ArtSparks Foundation provided Narendrayash with a lower primary curriculum based on the age-group that he was working with along with all the materials needed to conduct it. Through this project, he 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 ALP with a group of students belonging to class 4th and 5th standard from Government Primary School, Basdhara. Around 20% of the students are first generation learners and almost all the children receive less or no support from their families in academics. One of the first steps before stepping into the role of a facilitator was to go through the suggestions and guidelines shared by the Artsparks team. This actually helped to broadly understand and ideate how the engagement takes shape through the various sessions.

At the beginning, there was a lot of curiosity among the participating children since something new was taking place and also a little hesitation on certain aspects like thinking beyond what was told by the teacher and experimenting on their own. As they started doing their tasks, they would ask questions like - *bada draw karu ki chota?* (should I draw big or small?) *yeh chote chote akriti kaise banayenge?* (how do I make these small patterns?). I would pose questions back to them like 'how big do you think the head of the animal is?' and 'Do you think your imaginary animal can be different from the one you saw in the picture?'-using the inquiry-based facilitation that we learned from the EdSparks Collective sessions. Children would quickly understand the hints and engage with their tasks.

One of the students, Sanjana (name changed) was very shy and would often choose not to respond whenever it came to sharing or speaking about what she was working on. It became a major struggle for me in the first 3 to 4 sessions to motivate her. Often as a facilitator we find ourselves responding more to children who respond to us, or believe that letting others speak will encourage others which was clearly not working in this case. By taking small steps like speaking with Sanjana individually about her work

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during the sessions helped her to overcome her apprehensions. Short questions like what shapes were found, what patterns were observed, etc., helped me to better engage with Sanjana. Through this process I could see small but incremental changes as Sanjana grew more confident in sharing her work with others in the later sessions.

An important learning from Edsparks Collective has been the joy of discovery, and the ALP provided numerous ways where I could see that the children discovered things on their own. Maya (name changed), one of the participating students was initially sad by the fact that erasers could not be used but she soon started to draw dotted lines and made the outlines light. Maya would come up to me and say '*dekho halke halke seh dots banaye, mein baki sab ko ye share karu kya?*' (Look I made light dots to draw outlines, can I also share this with others?). Later Maya would not even ask and readily share her discoveries with others and even motivate others.

I could see the children developing patience as the sessions went on. The initial habit of rushing transformed into working more minutely and asking for more time to work on their pieces. While the children were sharing materials, I could see how they created their own bargaining and management system. The ALP also showed me how we must recognize that children have their own ideas and it is important that we nurture it. As facilitators we often carry a bias that we are the knowledge-bearers who can impart knowledge. Children's responses during the ALP sessions helped me understand that knowledge grows from interaction between the educator and the children.

A very important aspect has been my own discovery of how art shapes our lives, societies and norms. In the third session where I introduced paper collage to the children, it involved tearing of paper. I saw everyone in the group was very hesitant as children are often asked not to tear or waste paper in



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classrooms. However, simple re-assurances like the fact that we would not be wasting paper (even the scraps could be used in their artwork) helped to overcome the hesitation.

One of the most important learnings from the ALP has been to develop acceptance and patience as the key to engage with children. Planning sessions before hand would give me confidence and ability to shape the sessions in a more efficient manner.

As children, we were molded into believing that art needs to be perfect. This need for perfection would often discourage me to pursue art. The Edsparks sessions held prior to the ALP helped me to get familiar with art in a unique way and I also was able to learn the pedagogical strategies that were used. Previously, as a facilitator I would often consider art or drawing sessions to be something which is done as an extra-curricular activity. The EdSparks sessions and the subsequent ALP has helped me to understand that visual art can be more process driven and systematic, and requires careful planning just as one does for arithmetic and language learning.

## Upcoming Events

### Learning Circle (For EdSparks Cohort Members Only)



#### Clay Sculpture (12+ yrs)

16th & 17th December 2022, Friday & Saturday

We are happy to conduct the 13th Learning Circle with our EdSparks cohort members! The learning circles are intended to continuously build and share knowledge around art education with the cohort members through hands-on engagements and discussions.

It is important to consider the stages of artistic development to design developmentally-appropriate curriculum that challenges, does not overwhelm, and excites students, furthering them from one level of development to the next. Through this session, we will explore how to better understand how a child develops artistically using the medium clay.

To register for the session please click here: <https://forms.gle/L49gSQjTAfZvPua88/>

*"Art is coming face to face with yourself."*

—Jackson Pollock