

THE ARTSPARKS ANGLE



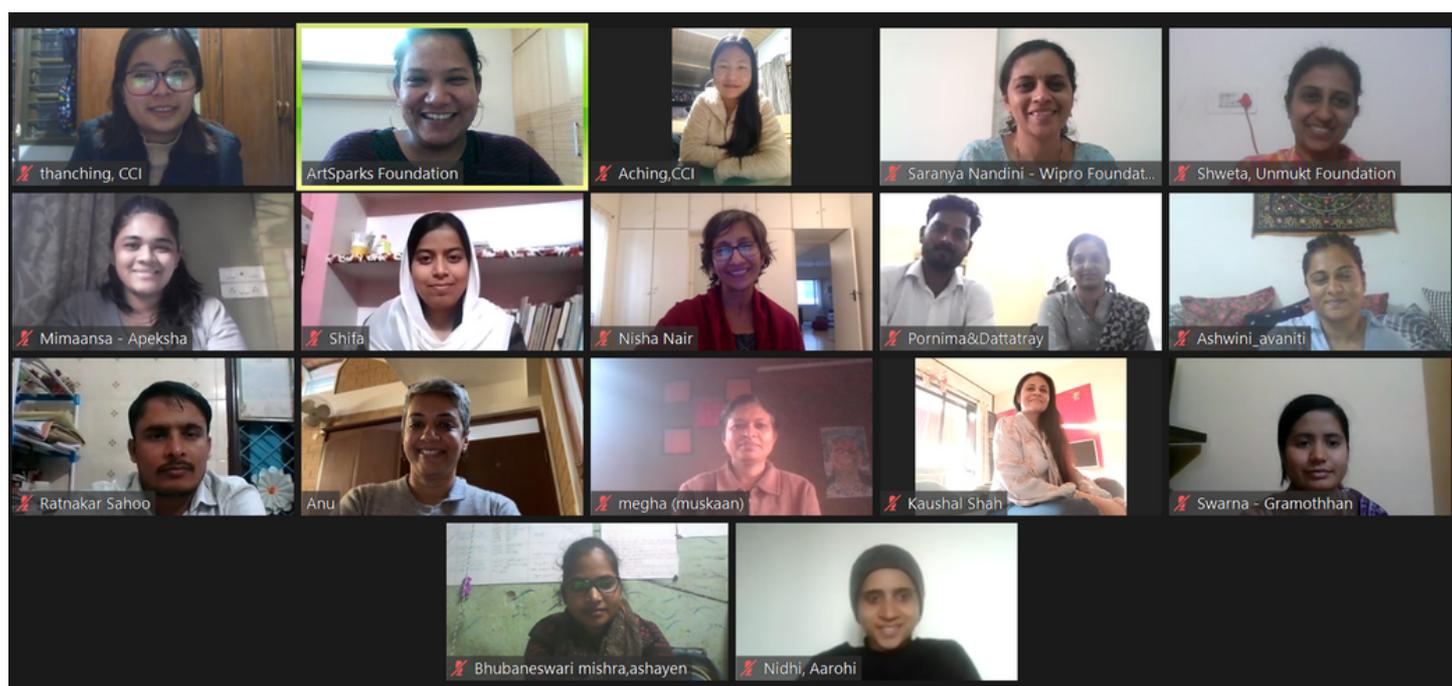
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Welcome Message

We are happy to present the latest edition of *The ArtSparks Angle*, ArtSparks' Professional Learning and Development Program newsletter. In this edition we cover the highlights of the second half of EdSparks Collective 2022-23 program. We also have Nageswari from FEATHERS, a past EdSparks Collective participant, reflecting on her experiences on conducting art-based interventions with the children that she works with.

EdSparks Collective 2022-23



EdSparks Collective has completed its 5th year and participants from 11 partner organizations have completed this one-of-a-kind professional program in the year 2022-23. These organizations range from those working with children with special needs, to those working on foundational literacy and numeracy, to those offering library education programming, and much more.

The second half of EdSparks Collective 2022-23, ArtSparks Foundation's Professional Development Program, was conducted from Jan. 16th to 21st, 2023. In the first half of the program, the participants had an opportunity to experience and explore different art mediums that gave them in-depth knowledge on the potential and contribution of each medium in an educational space. This was done through mindful art facilitation highlighted throughout the course that includes taking into account children's development stage, needs, etc., to create inclusive classrooms. The participants were able to understand how these art-based interventions can stimulate 21st century learning and life skills in children.

After the first half of the program, the participants were required to conduct Action

Learning Projects (ALP) in the field, back at their own spaces to have a practical experience of what they learned and see how it fits in with their specific demographics. For this, participants were provided with an art-based curriculum and art materials that guided them to implement the program with children in either Early Childhood, Lower Primary or Upper Primary grades.

Participants were able to use their learnings from the first six sessions while implementing the ALP as they recalled their experience as learners and were able to relate better with their students. As a result, they were able to support the children they work with through the process in a more reflective manner. After concluding their ALPs, each participant reflected upon, reported and presented their experiences and learnings with the entire cohort and the ArtSparks team.

All the participants shared what a rich practical learning experience they had through the ALP. Even for those who faced challenges, the ability to overcome the challenges on their own was empowering. It helped to establish and strengthen the notion that armed with the right tools and understandings, they are extremely capable of executing a robust and educationally

meaningful art-based programs with the children they serve. There was a general understanding that if a 6-7 session program could have such an impact on the children they serve, continued arts programming would be transformative for their children. Here are a few excerpts of participant reflections from the Action Learning Project (ALP):

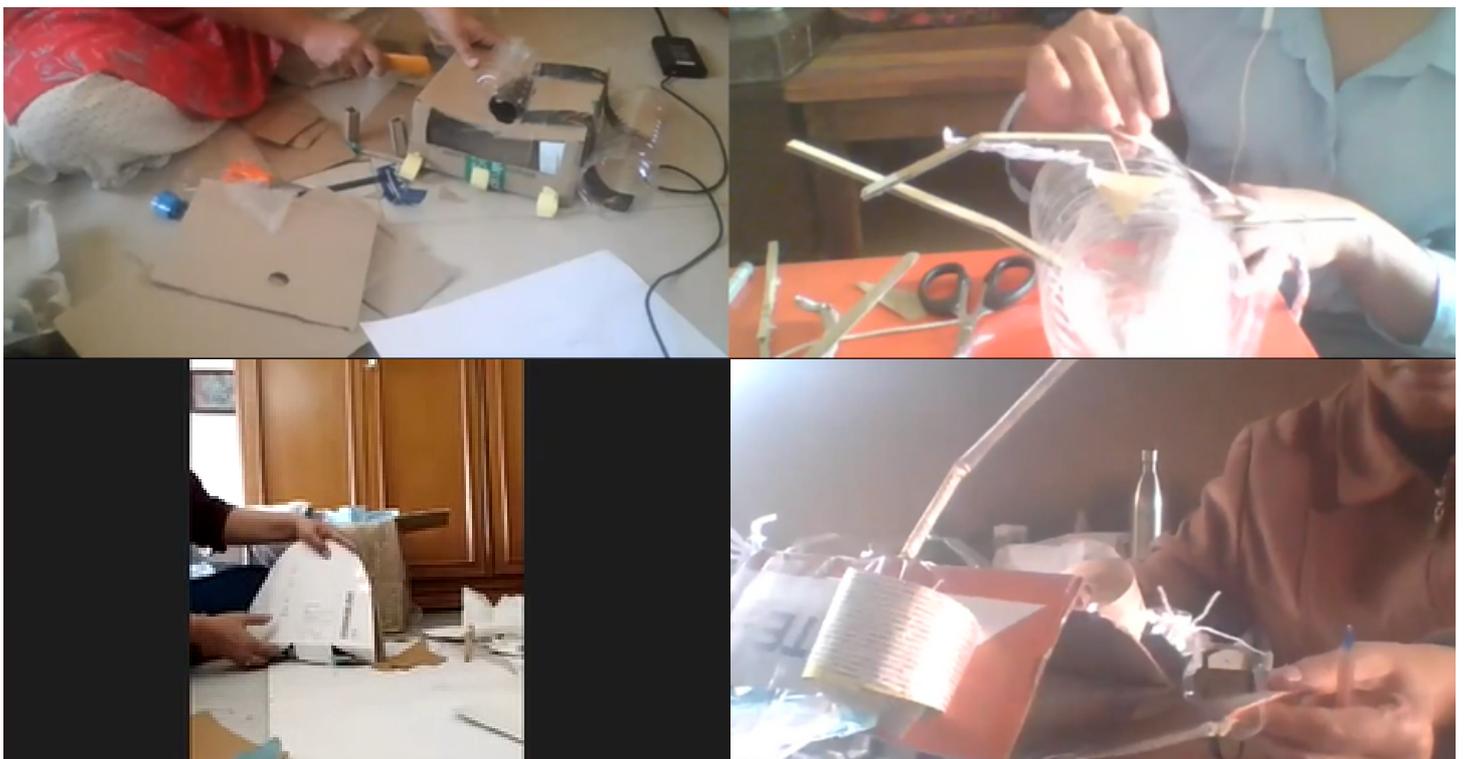
“At every step I was reminded of our own experience through the first phase of the course and how the activities had something in it for everyone irrespective of any prior exposure to art. Art is such an amazing tool to cater to diverse needs and levels of diverse children. Opening up children at such an early age to self-directed exploration, being mindful of resources, collaborating in a group, understanding the uniqueness each one has to offer can be such valuable lessons that have the potential to become truly embedded in how the child perceives and understands the world.”

“The ALP made me realize the importance of introducing a multitude of materials like colours,

different kinds of papers, scissors, glue, etc. that are visually attractive and build sensory strength. The final sharing done by the children built creative thinking and imagination. Each session could be mapped with many learning outcomes across subjects. Learnings from every session helped me plan and facilitate the next session better.”

In the second half of the program, we focused more on deepening knowledge around art education through exposure to curriculum development, assessment, etc. The participants designed their own arts-integrated curriculum and constructed their own personalized implementation plan at the end of the program. Some of the participants shared their experience of engaging with art and art education over the duration of the program:

“Before this program, I thought that art can only be used for entertainment. But after this program, my thinking has changed. I now understand how much we can teach children through art and how much they can accomplish in an art class. I have understood the importance of art and the role





that it plays in children's growth and development."

"EdSparks Collective by ArtSparks Foundation hit as a bright light coming from the laptop and made us smile ear to ear. We were reminded to be responsible for children's experiences so that he/she is not wasting time. ArtSparks did not only help us learn art facilitation experientially with them, they also empowered us to implement it at our organisation. The 5-year long search on 'how should art be taught?' has got some relevant answers now. The best part is that they are always available to scaffold us for all of our big and small doubts with a smile."

We are excited to welcome this passionate group of learners and educators into the larger EdSparks Community of Practice that consists of 60+ organizations. The purpose of this community is to provide opportunities for the cohort members to serve as sounding boards to one another, access additional content ideas, test out and share ideas, receive feedback and ongoing support from the ArtSparks team for deepening understanding around art-based learning and programming. We look forward to engaging them in extended workshops and learning circles as part of the ongoing support provided by ArtSparks.

Spotlight: Story From the Field

It gives us great pleasure to showcase in this section, Nageswari from FEATHERS, who was an EdSparks Collective (2021-22) participant. FEATHERS works towards building the physical and mental wellbeing of future citizens of the country. This excerpt includes Nageswari's experiences of participating in EdSparks Collective and conducting the Action Learning Project (ALP) as part of the program. For this particular ALP, ArtSparks Foundation provided Nageswari with a curriculum based on the age-group that she was working with along with all the materials needed to conduct it. Through this project, she had to take children through a process of making an imaginary animal collage that facilitated the development of various skills and attitudes in the children such as problem-solving, flexible thinking, and more.

I conducted my Action Learning Project with students from Ponmeni slum in Madurai, which is located behind our Remediation Centre. Six students participated out of which two were boys and four were girls. Out of the group of children, two of them study at a private school and rest of the four students are studying at a local government school. The students from private schools had some experience in drawing with the guidance of a school drawing teacher. They generally draw natural sceneries like trees and hills in their art class. Rest of the four students who study in the government school have had no art class experience.

"..now I realize that art classes are equally important like the core subjects. "

When I gave an introduction and explained to the students about the session, they were interested in participating in the art program. In the beginning, the children expressed their fear of drawing. After implementing the art facilitation, we learned during EdSparks Collective, they felt confident to draw. In the first session, the students finished drawing quickly. They felt a sense of accomplishment as they were getting an opportunity to create something from their own imagination.

As the sessions progressed, the students loved working with so many different materials. The students were very happy and they were very engaged while exploring different ways of cutting and creating textures. Students were very active and energetic throughout these sessions. They did not care about the time and they were lost in the enjoyment of making the animal collage. Students who had no experience with drawing, were hesitant at first, but after seeing their peers do it, they gained confidence and tried it out themselves. The facilitation involved a lot of encouragement and motivation for the children. As a result, the kids were fully involved in each session. They were remarkably



engrossed and concentrated while creating their collage pieces.

I was able to recognize a number of opportunities for the development of children's skills and attitudes. Sudheer (*name changed*) showed a lot of curiosity during the demonstration, but had some trouble while working on his art piece. He sought the help of Pammi (*name changed*), one of the kids who had helped him when he was drawing. After receiving assistance, Sudheer felt more comfortable. I also noticed that as the children were from both private and public schools, they were hesitant to interact with one another. However, by the end of the sessions, they had resolved their difficulties, socialized effectively, and genuinely assisted each other. The students were elated after finishing all of the sessions, and they sought appreciation from their parents. They had an immense feeling of pride with the work they created by the end of the sessions.

During the demonstration, I told them about simple shapes such as circles, rectangles, squares, and triangle in English. I noticed that they were confused. The students were not accustomed with the names of shapes in English. As I realized it, I started using both Tamil and English terms. However, by the end of the lessons, all students were competent with the English terms for the different shapes and forms.

Through these sessions I realized that a facilitator should give students sufficient time to explore, make discoveries, and use their imagination in their work. Munni (*name changed*), one of the students, did not finish her hybrid animal paper collage work, and she continued to add creative details long after the sessions ended. I realized the value of allowing time for curiosity.

I was able to find that even without prior exposure, students were able to do well in the art class. I realized that robust art education really brings creativity, imagination, exploring discoveries and improving communication among students. Before conducting this, I always thought that the core subject classes are more important than the art

class. But after the sessions, I realized the importance of art-based learning interventions. Whenever I visit or work with schools, I will definitely spread this awareness among teachers. I was able to see how a robust approach towards art education brings about more imagination and creativity than the standard art classes that we have always seen and experienced.

Before the ALP I thought that the art period could be used for teaching other subjects like Math and English. But now I realize that art classes are equally important like the core subjects. I realized that we should not use that period for teaching other subjects. I also realized that conditioned teaching and thinking should be changed, only then imagination, creativity and the joy of making discoveries could be brought among children.

Upcoming Events

ArtSpeaks Session #17



Wonders of the World of Art, Series I

11th Feb. 2023, Saturday

10:00am to 12:00pm (IST) via Zoom

ArtSpeaks is a space where people come together, experience art in new ways and are challenged to alter their previous conceptions of art, based upon their previous experiences. These past experiences include being ridiculed for not achieving perfection in art, being labelled as "non-artistic" or "not creative", and/or having their individual ways of expression stifled. At ArtSparks, we are driven by the belief that everyone deserves access to art, and everyone has the capacity to create. Art can bring out the beautiful uniqueness of each individual person. Not to mention the myriad learning opportunities embedded in the process of art-making. We at ArtSparks constantly create opportunities for individuals from all walks of life to experience the wonders of the world of art. Come join us and break these myths and misconceptions around art education through our ArtSpeaks sessions!

To register for the session, please click here: <https://forms.gle/mwysL4FsFUemNyF7I>

"Don't worry about how you 'should' draw it. Just draw it the way you see it."

—Tim Burton