

Introduction to *Start with the Arts*

Introduction

Family Letters and Arts Boxes

A Guide for Inclusive
Practice in Your Classroom

Introduction

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Start with the Arts is an instructional resource developed by VSA arts that uniquely combines literacy, family involvement, and inclusive strategies for teaching the arts to young children, including children with disabilities. Incorporating long-standing educational principles as well as some of the most recent research on early childhood learning, *Start with the Arts* is designed to actively involve children of all abilities in arts experiences—including visual arts, creative dramatics, dance and creative movement, and music.

Inclusion through Universal Design and Differentiated Instruction

Today's classroom is more diverse than ever, including students with a range of learning styles and abilities. Attending school for the first time can be a challenge—especially for children with disabilities, who may develop at different rates and in different ways. They may exhibit challenges with communication, impulse control, motor coordination, and manipulation of materials. *Start with the Arts* is based on the underlying premise that children of all abilities should receive appropriate instruction based on sound teaching strategies for individual achievement. To help ensure the success and inclusion of all children, *Start with the Arts*

employs the concepts of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction through creativity.

Universal Design. What is Universal Design? Typically, products and environments are designed for the average user. In contrast, Universal Design (UD) is “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Mace, 2008). For example, a standard door is not accessible to everyone; installing a large switch allows more people, such as people in wheelchairs, to enter it. When UD principles are applied, sensors would be installed to signal the door to open when anyone approaches, and the building would become accessible to everyone—a small child, a man carrying a large box, an elderly woman, or a person using a walker or wheelchair (Burgstahler, 2007).

Universal Design for Learning helps educators meet the challenge of diversity in the classroom by suggesting flexible instructional materials, techniques, and strategies. “A universally designed curriculum is designed from the outset to meet the needs of the greatest number of users, making costly, time-consuming, and after-the-fact changes to curriculum unnecessary” (CAST, 2008, p. 3). See the sidebar “Primary

Principles of Universal Design for Learning” for more details.

Primary Principles of Universal Design for Learning

- **Principle I:** Provide Multiple Means of Representation (the “What” of learning). Students differ in the ways that they perceive and comprehend information that is presented to them. For example, those with sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness or deafness), learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia), language or cultural differences, and so forth may all require different ways of approaching content. Others may simply grasp information better through visual or auditory means rather than printed text. In reality, there is no one means of representation that will be optimal for all students; providing options in representation is essential.
- **Principle II:** Provide Multiple Means of Expression (the “How” of learning). Students differ in the ways that they can navigate a learning environment and express what they know. For example, individuals with significant motor disabilities (e.g., cerebral palsy), those who struggle with strategic and organizational abilities (e.g., executive

function disorders, ADHD), those who have language barriers, and so forth approach learning tasks very differently and will demonstrate their mastery very differently. Some may be able to express themselves well in writing text but not oral speech, and vice versa. In reality, there is no one means of expression that will be optimal for all students; providing options for expression is essential.

- **Principle III:** Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (the “Why” of learning). Students differ markedly in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn. Some students are highly engaged by spontaneity and novelty while others are disengaged, even frightened, by those aspects, preferring strict routine. In reality, there is no one means of representation that will be optimal for all students; providing multiple options for engagement is essential.

(CAST, 2008)

Extensive guidelines for implementing the concept of UDL can be downloaded from www.cast.org/publications/UDLguidelines/version1.html.

Differentiated Instruction. Many factors influence children’s learning, such as learning style, readiness, learning pace, how they value learning, and their confidence in learning. Children’s strengths and preferences affect not only the ease with which they learn, but also how they can best represent what they know and understand (Heacox, 2002). Howard Gardner (1983, 1993), through his exploration of the theory of multiple intelligences, has contributed significantly to the development of this concept (see the box “Multiple Intelligences” for more details).

Multiple Intelligences

In the early 1980s Howard Gardner, professor of education at Harvard University, first described his theory of multiple intelligences. He proposed that there are at least seven types of intelligences. In most people, these intelligences work together to solve problems. Over the past decades he has expanded his theory to include at least eight different kinds of intelligences (Armstrong, 2000, p. 2):

1. Linguistic—The capacity to use words effectively, whether orally (e.g., as a storyteller, orator, or politician) or in writing (e.g., as a poet, playwright, editor, or journalist).

- 2. Logical-Mathematical**—The capacity to use numbers effectively (e.g., as a mathematician, tax accountant, or statistician) and to reason well (e.g., as a scientist, computer programmer, or logician).
- 3. Spatial**—The ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately (e.g., as a hunter, scout, or guide) and to perform transformations on those perceptions (e.g., as an interior decorator, architect, artist, or inventor).
- 4. Bodily-Kinesthetic**—Expertise in using one’s whole body to express ideas and feelings (e.g., as an actor, a mime, an athlete, or a dancer) and facility in using one’s hands to produce or transform things (e.g., as a craftsperson, sculptor, mechanic, or surgeon).
- 5. Musical**—The capacity to perceive (e.g., as a music aficionado), discriminate (e.g., as a music critic), transform (e.g., as a composer), and express (e.g., as a performer) musical forms.
- 6. Interpersonal**—The ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other people.
- 7. Intrapersonal**—Self-knowledge and the ability to act adaptively on the basis of that knowledge.

8. Naturalist—Expertise in the recognition and classification of the numerous species—the flora and fauna—of an individual’s environment. In the case of those growing up in an urban environment, the capacity to discriminate among nonliving forms such as cars, sneakers, and music CD covers.

(Armstrong, 2008)

Differentiated Instruction (DI) involves three elements of the curriculum that can be differentiated: content, process, and product (Tomlinson, 2001). “Differentiating instruction means changing the pace, level, or kind of instruction you provide in response to individual learners’ needs, styles, or interests” (Heacox, 2002, p. 5). This approach to teaching and learning provides multiple options for children to take in information and make sense of ideas (see the sidebar “Components of Differentiated Instruction” for more details). Teachers are flexible in their approach to teaching and adjust the curriculum and presentation of information to learners rather than expecting children to modify themselves to the curriculum (Hall, 2002).

Principles of Differentiated Instruction

Teachers can differentiate at least four classroom elements based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile: content, process, products, and learning environment. For additional details and examples, please see “A Guide for Inclusive Practice in Your Classroom.”

Content

Differentiating content refers to varying what the student needs to learn or how the student will get access to the information, such as presenting ideas through both auditory and visual means.

Process

Differentiating process refers to varying activities in which the student engages to make sense of or master the content, such as providing interest centers that encourage students to explore subsets of the class topic of particular interest to them.

Products

Differentiating product refers to varying culminating projects that ask the student to rehearse, apply, and extend what he/she has learned in a unit, such as giving students options of how to express required learning (e.g., create a puppet show, write a letter, or develop a mural with labels).

Learning Environment

Differentiating learning environment refers to varying the way the classroom works and feels, such as making sure there are places in the room to work quietly and without distraction, as well as places that invite student collaboration.

(Tomlinson, 2008)

The arts provide endless opportunities to employ the concept of Differentiated Instruction. For example, children are given the task of describing how they came to school that day—some children may choose to draw a map or picture of their journey; others may want to create a song, dance, or act it out; still others may prefer to tell or write a story about it.

Start with the Arts subscribes to the philosophy that all children can and will learn and teachers should have high expectations for *all* children. However, a high expectation for one child may look quite different than a high expectation for another child. Tiered instruction is commonly used. For example, when teaching children how to draw using perspective, some children may need to begin by copying lines the teacher has made on the chalkboard, while others may be able to create their own line drawings, but need additional one-on-one instruction on shading or

using scale (The Access Center, 2004).

The lessons in *Start with the Arts* focus on children's abilities, or what they can do, rather than what they cannot do. An extensive section called "A Guide for Inclusive Practice in Your Classroom" follows this introduction and offers suggestions for including all children in the arts experience (see page 35).

A Variety of Settings and Age Groups

Start with the Arts is meant for young children (average age 3–6 years), but many lessons are appropriate or can be easily adapted for older children. *Start with the Arts* may be used in many different settings, including the classroom, before- and after-school programs, library and museum programs, preschool programs, home school programs, and children's developmental and recreational programs. The educator can select the lessons and activities that are most appropriate and integrate them into the current program. The resource is designed to be flexible so that even within lessons, educators can select portions that best meet their students' needs.

Critical Success Factors

Language is the key to learning. Boyer (1991) notes that children who fail to develop adequate speech and language skills in the first years of life are up to six times more likely to experience reading problems in school than those who receive adequate stimulation. He emphasizes

that literacy in the richest, fullest sense means learning to communicate not just verbally but nonverbally as well, because young children respond powerfully to music, dance, and the visual arts, even before becoming fluent in the symbol system of language.

The arts are an excellent vehicle for engaging young children in learning, sharing learning experiences, and thinking about what they have learned. Through interacting with the art forms, children have opportunities to create and communicate new knowledge in a meaningful context. Using experiences in the arts as a common base, teachers can build a language-rich and meaningful environment for children by stimulating discussion, responding to children's natural curiosity, encouraging and modeling language use, and fostering the development of inquiry skills. Through carefully constructed learning experiences in the classroom and at home, *Start with the Arts* engages young children in developing important expressive and receptive verbal and nonverbal communication skills through the arts.

VSA arts, in developing *Start with the Arts*, considered factors important to reaching children effectively and enriching their learning experiences:

The arts are inherently motivating and critical to the development of cognitive, linguistic, motor, social, and emotional skills. *Start with the Arts* uses arts and literary activities

to engage children in expressing concepts, thoughts, and feelings. As they learn to express themselves creatively, children build and strengthen specific skills in literacy and develop an understanding of their personal relationship to the world around them.

The arts naturally enrich children's lives with contributions from many cultures and ethnic origins. Our global, multicultural, and multiethnic society offers many ways to increase children's understanding of different viewpoints and ways of living. As an expression of culture and ethnicity, the arts can expand children's view of the world and teach tolerance. Throughout lessons, *Start with the Arts* lists books representing children from a variety of cultures, abilities, and family structures. Some lessons, such as "Music from Many Places," highlight practices from different cultures. Others include discussion about people from different backgrounds.

The arts, fused with a thematic approach, support most early childhood programs. Recent brain research indicates that helping children understand connections and form patterns is important to their learning (Project Great Start, 2005). A theme-based model encourages children to form those patterns. *Start with the Arts* themes generally pertain to children's life experiences and interests. By selecting topics of high interest to children, educators can build on children's current

knowledge and interests by developing new skills and knowledge. *Start with the Arts* is organized into four themes: “All About Me”; “How I Go from Here to There”; “Feeling Hot, Cold, and Wet”; and “The World Around Me.” The activities within these themes can be easily linked to other activities throughout the standard early childhood curriculum. Within each theme, *Start with the Arts* includes three to five lessons for each art domain, for a total of 54 lessons.

Learning in the arts affects academic and social skills. Instances where learning in one context assists learning in a different context is referred to as “transfer” (Catterall, 2002). Sound research now links arts learning to an array of academic and social outcomes (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Compendium Summary: The Arts and Academic and Social Outcomes

ARTS LEARNING	COGNITIVE CAPACITIES AND MOTIVATIONS TO LEARN
<i>Visual Arts</i>	
Drawing	Content and organization of writing
Visualization training	Sophisticated reading skills/interpretation of text
Reasoning about art	Reasoning about scientific images
Instruction in visual art	Reading readiness

ARTS LEARNING	COGNITIVE CAPACITIES AND MOTIVATIONS TO LEARN
<i>Music</i>	
Early childhood music training	Cognitive development
Music listening	Spatial reasoning Spatial temporal reasoning Quality of writing Prolivity of writing
Piano/keyboard learning	Mathematics proficiency Spatial reasoning
Piano and voice	Long-term spatial temporal reasoning
Music performance	Self-efficacy Self-concept
Instrument training	Reading SAT verbal scores
Music with language learning	English skills for ESL learners

ARTS LEARNING	COGNITIVE CAPACITIES AND MOTIVATIONS TO LEARN
<i>Creative Dramatics</i>	
Dramatic enactment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story comprehension (oral and written) Character identification Character motivation Increased peer interaction Writing proficiency and prolixity Conflict resolution skills Concentrated thought Understanding social relationships Ability to understand complex issues and emotions Engagement Skill with subsequently read, unrelated texts Problem-solving dispositions/strategies General self-concepts
<i>Dance</i>	
Traditional dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-confidence Persistence Reading skills Nonverbal reasoning Expressive skills Creativity in poetry Social tolerance Appreciation of individual/group social development

ARTS LEARNING	COGNITIVE CAPACITIES AND MOTIVATIONS TO LEARN
Creative movement	General creative thinking—fluency General creative thinking—originality, elaboration, flexibility
<i>Multi-arts Programs</i>	
Integrated arts/academics	Reading, verbal, and mathematics skills Creative thinking Achievement motivation Cognitive engagement Instructional practice in the school Professional culture of the school School climate Community engagement and identity
Intensive arts experience	Self-confidence Risk-taking Paying attention Persevering Empathy for others Self-initiating Task persistence Ownership of learning Collaboration skills Leadership Reduced drop out rates Educational aspirations Higher-order thinking skills

ARTS LEARNING	COGNITIVE CAPACITIES AND MOTIVATIONS TO LEARN
Arts-rich school environment	Creativity Engagement/attendance Range of personal and social developments Higher-order thinking skills

(Catterall, 2002)

The arts deepen the learning experience.

There are several reasons why the arts change a child’s learning experience (Fiske, 1999). The arts reach children who are not otherwise being reached. The arts are important in learning for all children, but may hold special significance for children with disabilities who typically bring a vast variety of learning styles to the educational setting (Riccio, Rollins, and Morton, 2003). The arts can help “level the playing field” for children from disadvantaged circumstances. In fact, there is evidence that high arts participation makes a more significant difference to students from low-income backgrounds than for high-income students (Catterall, Chapleau, and Iwanaga, 1999). Research has found that for some children the arts provide a reason, and sometimes the only reason, for coming to school. The ways in which the arts encourage collaboration can transform the environment,

and the skills it teaches helps prepare students for the workplace (see “What the Arts Add to the Learning Environment”).

What the Arts Add to the Learning Environment

The arts reach children in different ways. Children have different styles of learning and the arts tap into a variety of learning styles. Children who are considered classroom failures, perhaps “acting out” in a conventional classroom, often become high achievers in arts learning settings.

The arts allow children to learn about themselves and to connect to others. Children engage their “whole person” as they create artwork. In art there is no single right answer. When children engage in arts experiences, they

feel invested in ways that are deeper than “knowing the answer.” In the classroom, as effective arts learning communities are formed, the attitudes of children toward one another are altered.

The arts transform the learning environment.

When the arts become central to the learning environment, schools become places of discovery. As art is displayed in hallways, and students perform what they have learned, the buildings themselves are transformed and teachers are renewed.

The arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of children. In effective arts learning programs, the roles of the adults—teachers, parents, and other adults—change, as do their relationships with each other. When adults become coaches, or active facilitators of learning, this alters the dynamics between them and young people. Stevenson and Deasy (2005) adopt the metaphor of “third space” to describe the positive and supportive relationships that develop among students, teachers, and the school community as a whole while creating, performing, or responding to works of art.

In the arts, the term “third space” describes the emotional, communal, even spiritual transformation that takes place when individuals or groups work together to complete and exhibit an artwork, or produce a performance. The new roles that they

Start with the Arts activities are designed to work take on as part of a play, a dance, a song, for students of all backgrounds and learning or a painting, can become a part of their styles. Modifications to lessons are suggested so identity—maybe even for the rest of their lives. that teachers can adapt them to the needs of specific populations.

Arts activities and arts learning should be continued and extended to the home environment. *The arts provide new challenges for those children already considered successful.* The arts can offer a new and unlimited challenge for children who have outgrown their established learning environments. Older children have the development (Christenson, 1999). Families and other community members provide many of the experiences and relationships needed for young thrive—from the experience of working with professional artists. Their active involvement can take many forms, both inside and outside of the classroom (see “A Partnership with Families!”).

The adult workplace has changed radically in the recent past, as have the skills needed to prepare for, and compete, in the workplace. The arts learning experiences described in research show remarkable consistency with the skills that are needed in the evolving workplace—the ability to generate, bring to life, and communicate new ideas.

Start with the Arts activities are designed to work for students of all backgrounds and learning styles. Modifications to lessons are suggested so that teachers can adapt them to the needs of specific populations.

Arts activities and arts learning should be continued and extended to the home environment.

Families' hopes and expectations play a critical role in children's early development (Christenson, 1999). Families and other community members provide many of the experiences and relationships needed for young children's success. Their active involvement can take many forms, both inside and outside of the classroom (see "A Partnership with Families").

A Partnership with Families

Research states that children do better when their families are involved in the education process. Children earn higher grades and test scores, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education (Funkhouser and Gonzales, 1997). Thus, schools—particularly those serving low-income and other students at risk of failure—now place an even higher priority on increasing family involvement in their children's education.

Typically, the parents of children who do well in school have close relationships with teachers and caregivers. These relationships not only help families and children, but provide educators with insights essential to meeting children's academic and developmental needs. Building these solid partnerships between educators and families takes time

and effort, yet everyone reaps the benefits.

The literature informs us that offering families a range of support, beyond mere teaching, is critical to positive outcomes for children (Dunst, Trivette, and Deal, 1988). The family bears the chief responsibility for protecting the rights and well being of all of its members. Rightfully, parents play the key role in deciding what is important for themselves and their family, from fulfilling basic human needs to participating in arts activities. But the education professional must support and strengthen each family's ability to nurture its members. This means that educators must remain aware of, and responsive to, the needs and priorities of each family.

Schools need to provide parents with the opportunities and support to become true partners in the education of their children (Funkhouser and Gonzales, 1997). Too often schools expect families to do it all alone. To develop effective partnerships with families, all school staff (administrators, teachers, and support staff) can play a role in creating a welcoming school environment. Parents should be encouraged to raise questions, voice their concerns, and participate in decision making. Schools should provide parents with not only invitations to participate in their children's learning, but also with the information and training that encourage their involvement.

Truly engaging parents and other family members means looking beyond “traditional” definitions of involvement. It means moving beyond attending parent/teacher meetings and/or signing report cards. Successful schools seek to support families in the activities outside of school that can encourage their children’s learning (Funkhouser and Gonzales, 1997).

Start with the Arts strives to encourage families—parents, guardians, older brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends—to take an active role in conversations about the arts activities and to continue the learning in the home setting. To facilitate this, a “Family Letter” with ideas and a list of books, songs, and Internet sites accompany each lesson. At the end of this introduction, additional Family Letters introduce *Start with the Arts* and its lessons and describe each of its four arts domains, along with ways to assemble Arts Boxes.

Learning Through an Array of Art Forms

The activities found in *Start with the Arts* encourage children to learn skills related to four art domains: Visual Arts, Creative Dramatics, Dance and Creative Movement, and Music.

Creative Dramatics. Dramatic activities involve children in reading and writing as a holistic and meaningful communication process. In

imaginary, unscripted, and spontaneous scenes, meaning is made from the engagement and transactions between the teacher and students. Drama provides a context for children to relate to their lived experience. McNaughton (1997) reports that in writing development, children who experience drama also appear to be more capable of making appropriate linguistic choices as well as expressing opinions or suggesting solutions. Dramatic expression also is a valuable tool for building self-esteem and self-awareness. Through drama experiences, children become fluent in language and movement, express and elaborate on ideas, increase vocabulary, and learn to imitate.

Rather than formal theater, which involves scripts and performances for audiences, *Start with the Arts* techniques are more spontaneous and include pantomime, role play, dialogue, improvisation, puppetry, and storytelling.

Visual Arts. Young children may have difficulty putting their ideas, thoughts, and feelings into words but can express themselves through the visual arts. Through exploring and discovering new means of expression, children develop understanding and gain control over their world.

In *Start with the Arts* visual arts lessons, children are given opportunities to create through drawing, painting, constructing, and sculpting. They learn to view works of art with

sensitivity and appreciation. They can actively express themselves through manipulating and controlling tools and working with the concepts of color, line, shape, form, and pattern.

Dance and Creative Movement. Nonverbal expression is a critical part of communication. As children move, they become more aware of how they can use their bodies to express themselves as well as understand others. *Start with the Arts* dance and creative movement lessons capitalize on children’s inherent and natural love of movement.

Start with the Arts lessons are not designed to teach formal dance steps, but rather to facilitate children’s learning as they explore the concepts of space, time, and energy as they relate to the body. Children learn to move in relation to others and in response to rhythm and music.

Music. Whether children are engaged in energetic activity or quiet time, music can set the tone for all their activities and enrich their learning experience. Educators need not be trained musicians or singers in order to enliven the classroom with music. Children will welcome and appreciate songs, recordings, instruments, rhythms, and even the use of music to signal transitions in the school day. As children participate in *Start with the Arts* music experiences, they explore and distinguish between such opposites as fast/slow, high/low, loud/soft, up/down, stop/go. They build

awareness of sound and silence, rhythm and melody, intonation and form.

Refer to “A Guide for Inclusive Practice in Your Classroom” on page 35 for ideas for including all children and developing literacy, general teaching tips for the arts, and more specific tips for each art domain.

Becoming Familiar with *Start with the Arts*

As a resource guide, *Start with the Arts* can be incorporated into many teaching styles and learning environments. Therefore, users are encouraged to first consider the possibilities that the 54 lessons and related materials offer. However, it is helpful to conduct activities in such a manner that respects the integrity of the activities and the educational objectives. Following are some ideas for getting the most from *Start with the Arts* and incorporating it into curriculum.

Peruse the entire resource to familiarize yourself with its features. Review the Family Letters and Arts Boxes found in this introduction. Review “A Guide for Inclusive Practice in Your Classroom,” a time-saving guide to prepare teachers for getting started. The guide includes general advice for preparing the classroom and teaching arts; specific tips for each of the four arts domains; and tips for teaching children with some of the more common disabilities.

Then scan the individual lessons, which are organized by arts domain, within each of the four themes. Finally, the appendices include kindergarten through fourth grade National Standards for Visual Arts, Drama, Dance and Movement, and Music Education (listed in the National Standards for Art Education, © 1994 MENC, available online at www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards/);* a resource list including books about children with disabilities, songs, videos/DVDs, and Internet sites; and a comprehensive bibliography that includes all the books mentioned in the lessons.

Select and review at least one of the lessons in detail, noting their uniform format, which includes the following elements.

1. Activity Title
2. Learning Objectives—A list of instructional objectives for children.
3. Materials—A list of items needed for the lesson's activities.
4. Preparation—Things to do before presenting the lesson.
5. Including All Children
6. Read With Me

* Although more than 25 states have developed content standards for preschoolers and the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework describes learning expectations in each of eight domains, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) released a position statement outlining the risks and benefits of standards for preschoolers

7. Listen Up
8. Arts Experience
9. Introducing an Artist with a Disability
10. Learning Log
11. Family Letter—A letter for children to take home to their families, signed by the child, describing the class activity, suggesting ways to talk about the experience, and offering ideas for continuing learning at home.

Planning Your Arts Program

Select all or parts of lessons that you will use. There are many ways for you to incorporate them into your program. Consider your own preferred teaching style and the unique learning needs and requirements of your students. Keep in mind the following:

Activities and themes generally are not sequential, although some build on each other. For example:

- The lesson “My Body Is Me” identifies individual body parts, and the direction in which they move. It is presented as a building sequence however, teachers could present the opening portion without completing the entire exercise.

(NAEYC, 2002). In addition, North Carolina has developed Extended Content Standards for children in kindergarten through twelfth grade with the most significant cognitive disabilities, defining three entry points: symbolic, early symbolic, and pre-symbolic (see <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/ncecs>). This is a good resource for those working with children with cognitive disabilities.

- Although “Printing Patterns” could be conducted at any time, it works well for children to experience it after creating their portraits in “My Portrait,” so they can add patterns to their portraits’ clothing.

Activities may be tailored to include activities from more than one arts domain. For example:

- Children could create sound effects for the story in “Storms and Sounds,” a drama activity, and also create drawings about a stormy night, a visual arts extension to the story.
- “Breezy Chimes,” a music lesson, could be combined with “Wind Effects,” a dance and creative movement activity.

Activities are most effective when they relate to a current event. For example:

- “Here Come the Clouds” would be an effective visual arts activity for a cloudy day.
- The music lesson “Rain Song” would be appropriate for a rainy day.

Activities may be conducted in segments over several days or weeks. For example:

- The drama activity “Puppet Families” could

be organized into the following segments: (1) reading books and talking about families, (2) drawing portraits of family members, (3) discussing puppets and creating a puppet that represents a family member, (4) creating a puppet stage, and (5) holding a puppet show.

Activities may be adjusted, sometimes spontaneously, to correspond with the time available or with children’s moods. For example:

- Suppose children are sleepy and distracted and, therefore, not responding to song writing in the music activity “Yummy in My Tummy.” Switch to simply singing, perhaps to the words in one of the children’s books selections, and come back to the song writing at a later time.

Activities can be organized in a learning center format. For example:

- Children could experience the visual arts lesson “Favorite Seasons” and its extensions by selecting and/or rotating among the following centers: (1) reading books about different seasons, (2) drawing using a wet-chalk technique and (3) creating collages about a favorite time of the year.

Activities could start with a large group and then move to a learning center format. For example:

- For the visual arts activity “Going Places,” the discussion about travel and sculpture could take place as a large group. Afterwards, the vehicles could be constructed at learning centers. One center could be for gluing; another center could be for painting.

Selected activities can be adjusted based on children’s experience with the materials. If children have never played musical instruments, or if they have rarely used modeling clay, then the lesson first needs to focus only on the new materials or the new techniques. Help children discover what a medium can do. For example:

- Encourage them to manipulate clay in different ways so they can learn all the possibilities of the medium.
- Have them experience the range of sounds that different drums can make.

Continue this exploration and build familiarity over a period of time. Real comfort does not typically occur in one session. Once children know their materials and the rules and expectations for the arts experience, then they are ready for you to add another concept, such as using the musical instruments to create moods.

Activities should include concrete examples, when possible. Children’s learning will be more

comprehensive and long-lasting when they have firsthand experience. For example:

- If children are creating murals depicting an undersea world or dancing and moving as sea creatures, start off with the “real thing” by bringing in real crabs and show how they scurry across the floor. Have children feel the scales on the side of a fish or observe guppies darting about in a fish tank.
- Naturally, bringing snow to children in a warmer climate is impossible, but helping them realize the implications of it by feeling the warmth and coarseness of woolen hats is a step toward making the experience more definitive.

Remember to consider children who have allergies when making decisions about concrete experiences.

Activities should include a plan for including children with disabilities. When preparing lessons, ask the following questions:

- What is a reasonable outcome of this activity for children with disabilities? Is it the same or different from the outcomes other children will experience?
- Are modifications needed in group size or the pacing of the activity for children with disabilities to experience the desired outcome?
- Are modifications needed in the physical space or materials necessary for the activities?

- Would children benefit from a modified teaching approach, such as providing a child with cognitive disabilities an opportunity to explore, in advance, the materials that will be used in the lesson?
- What adjustments need to be made to the Family Letter? Do ideas for continuing the learning at home need to include accommodations for disabilities?

This introduction should help you plan your activities. However, the guide should provide considerable assistance in planning how to facilitate them, as should the notes included in individual lessons.

A final planning note: the books and materials listed in this resource are comprehensive. Gathering materials, books, and recordings at the last minute may be difficult. Instead, once you are generally familiar with all the *Start with the Arts* activities, you can build your collection at a comfortable pace. In time, you will become more familiar with the book and recording selections in your school or public library and can discuss possible selections to order with the librarian or media specialist. Stay alert for garage sale finds for the drama corner, the prop box, and the other Arts Boxes. Save examples and take photographs of children's work so that you can share these with later classes.

Getting Started with the Arts

This introduction and the materials that follow should help you incorporate arts into your

classroom. *Start with the Arts* is a vital beginning: it sets children well on their way to enjoying and reaping the many benefits of arts activities and learning for the rest of their lives. *VSA arts* hopes that you, the children you teach, and their families will enjoy this lifelong journey.

Family Letters and Arts Boxes

To help foster a supportive relationship with families, *Start with the Arts* presents Family Letters as a useful resource. As stated previously, each lesson concludes with a Family Letter briefly describing the activity, presenting ideas for building on the activities, and listing related children's books, songs, and Internet sites.

In addition to the letters that accompany the lessons, below are Family Letters to introduce the overall program and the learning for each of the four arts domains. They describe the Arts Boxes and encourage families to build a collection of arts-related materials for home learning and enjoyment.

Refer to the guide on page 35 for more ideas for involving families.

Start with the Arts Introductory Letter

Dear Family:

I am writing to tell you about your child's participation in *Start with the Arts*, a useful resource with arts lessons and activities that will enhance and expand your child's learning.

The arts—visual arts, creative dramatics, dance and creative movement, and music—are a cornerstone of early childhood programs. Through the arts, children develop skills and understanding that serve as a foundation for learning in other areas.

Start with the Arts combines arts activities with books and ideas for building children's literacy, ways to adapt lessons and materials to make sure children of all abilities are included, and family letters from your child to involve you as a partner in your child's learning. Letters will include some ideas for talking to your child about the activity and continuing the experience at home. Brothers, sisters, cousins—any family member—can join in!

Yours truly,

TEACHER'S NAME

P.S. I look forward to talking with you about *Start with the Arts* and hearing your ideas about what you and your child can do together at home.

Start with the Arts Family Letter for Visual Arts

Dear Family:

Your child's scribbles are more important than you might think! Young children learn communication skills through art. Try this. The next time your child "scribbles" on a piece of paper, ask, "Would you like to tell me about your drawing?" You may be surprised by all that your child has to say!

When children have ways to explore, discover, and express themselves through art, they learn to think and better solve problems.

To encourage your child's exploration, it would be good if you could keep a few basic supplies on hand. Most supplies, such as crayons, markers, unlined paper, paper plates, tape, glue, and a child's pair of scissors, can be found in grocery stores. Your child really does not need coloring books to "show how it is done." There is no right way to create art! Children would rather use their imaginations instead of coloring in someone else's design.

Could you help your child find some place at home to keep some art materials? I have included a list of some ideas for an Art Box. This is a big list, but just a few items are enough to get started.

Your child has agreed to take good care of the art materials and return them to the Art Box after using them. Please ask your child to tell you about what we are doing in class. Children also are very proud when their family puts their art work on the wall for everyone to see.

Maybe you and your child can even draw or create something together.

Yours truly,

TEACHER'S NAME

ART BOX

- Crayons, lots of colors. Take them out of the boxes and keep them in a larger container with a lid. Unwrapped crayons can be used on their sides and broken crayons are still okay to use.
- Paper, a variety: computer and typing paper, newsprint pads, drawing paper, construction paper
- Markers, water-based
- Scissors, child-size, lefty scissors for lefties, or scissors modified to meet your child's needs
- Paste, small bottles of glue, glue sticks
- Old magazines, greeting cards, and postcards that can be cut up
- A box to keep scrap paper
- Wallpaper sample books
- Scrap cloth, yarn, ribbon
- Paper plates

FOR THREE-DIMENSIONAL ART

- Old containers, cardboard boxes, egg cartons
- Old packing material
- Pieces of scrap wood
- White glue and heavy tape
- Modeling clay
- Clothes pins, chenille stems, buttons, straws

EXTRAS

- Hole punch
- Stickers and/or file labels, colored dots
- Small jars of tempera paint, large children's paint brushes
- Heavy and/or large paper for painting
- Old shirt or smock
- Tissue paper in a variety of colors
- Colored pencils
- Watercolor paints

Start with the Arts Family Letter for Creative Dramatics

Dear Family:

Have you noticed that, when your child uses his or her imagination, a towel can become a magic cape and a piece of rope can become a dangerous snake?

Play is a child's "work." Through play, children solve problems, expand thinking, learn social skills, and develop confidence. Young children especially enjoy pretending to be someone or something else!

You can encourage your child's creative and spur-of-the-moment play by having simple, inexpensive materials on hand. I have included some ideas for a Creative Dramatics Box. You and your child can start with just a few items and continue to build the collection.

Sit back and enjoy the show!

Yours truly,

TEACHER'S NAME

CREATIVE DRAMATICS BOX

- Old clothes, scarves, hats, accessories, neckties
- Large fabric scraps and old sheets to wrap, drape, and tie
- Aluminum foil for space suits, armor, and shields
- Old household items, such as discarded tools, an old telephone, a broken hair dryer without the cord, broom, and bucket
- A microphone, if available
- Cardboard boxes of various sizes for stages, scenery, and puppet shows
- Glue, heavy-duty tape (like package or duct tape)
- Paper plates and paper bags to create puppets (More supplies can be found in the Visual Arts Box)

Start with the Arts Family Letter for Dance and Creative Movement

Dear Family:

Young children naturally dance and play. They are always moving. With a little bit of help, maybe a few props, and lots of encouragement, you can channel your child's energy in ways that build self-esteem, self-expression, positive social skills, a good sense of physical space, and that develop small and large muscle coordination and strength. That's a lot!

One way to start would be to have a Dance and Creative Movement Box that is filled with materials to spur the imagination. You could give your child the opportunity to perform. Better yet, you and your child could dance together!

I have included some suggestions for a Dance and Creative Movement Box and some ideas for what you and your child can do.

Move, dance, play, enjoy!

Yours truly,

TEACHER'S NAME

DANCE and CREATIVE MOVEMENT BOX

- Scarves
- Colored tissue paper or tissues
- Crepe paper streamers (even a toilet paper roll)
- Elastic tape for stretching or pulling
- Bubbles
- Maracas, or a sealed container 1/2 full of dried macaroni
- Dancing socks: bells sewn onto top of ankle socks (nonskid soles give children extra traction while dancing)
- Favorite dancing DVDs or CDs
- "Inside balls" (Superball or styrofoam ball)
- Flashlight or glow stick (please check age requirement to see if appropriate for your child)
- Music
- Instruments (See Music Box)

We could:

- Create a dance with flowing scarves, tissue paper, or crepe paper.
- Stretch, using elastic tapes (found in sewing centers or variety stores). Sew the ends of tapes together to make a huge elastic band.
- Dance with balloons and/or bubbles to all kinds of music.
- Bounce or throw "inside balls" in new and inventive ways.
- Create dances in the dark with flashlights or glow sticks.
- Shadow-dance in a dark room in front of a light source.
- Write your name in the air with different parts of your body.
- Follow the leader by dancing facing a partner and imitating the movement.
- Dance and move in front of a mirror.

Start with the Arts Family Letter for Music

Dear Family:

Music is all around us, from television to radio to music in grocery stores. Did you know that you could build your child's listening, memory, communication, and social skills through music activities?

As with all the arts, your child's world is enriched when it is filled with songs, rhythm, playful chants, and instruments. It would be fun if you and your child could listen to different kinds of music, listen to music together, or sing together.

I have included some ideas for a Music Box for your home. It has tips for making your own instruments using simple materials, such as blocks of wood or containers with lids filled with rice and beans. You probably have the makings of a rhythm band in your own home and might not even know it!

Your child has agreed to take good care of the homemade instruments, as well as musical recordings, by keeping them in a special place and returning them when they are finished.

Together you and your child could enjoy favorite sounds and discover new ones.

Yours truly,

TEACHER'S NAME

MUSIC BOX

- Rhythm sticks. Use blocks of wood, old blocks, pieces of wooden dowel, rungs from an old chair, or any heavy sticks. Use a wooden dowel for the stick and add to one end a thread spool, cork, wooden bead, Superball, cotton ball covered with heavy cloth or a little piece of leather, or wrap the end of the stick with a rubber band. Drill or wrap, and glue firmly. A pencil with its eraser is also fine. Use rhythm sticks as drumsticks as well.
- Shakers. Use containers with lids—coffee cans, plastic deli containers, margarine tubs, film canisters, and anything else with a lid. Fill the containers with rice, beans, pebbles, lentils, acorns, and/or odd buttons. Tape or super-glue the lids securely.
- Bells of any size and sound. They are easy to find in yard sales and dollar stores. At holiday time you can buy a whole card of inexpensive “jingle bells” in different sizes, which can be used as is, or taken off the card and strung on a string.
- Wind instruments. Find various inexpensive bamboo flutes, whistles, old plastic recorders, and plastic bird “warblers.”
- Drums. Use a coffee can with a plastic lid, a bowl or a small wastebasket with heavy plastic stretched over the top, or plastic milk or liquid cleaner jugs held upside down.
- Cymbals. Use pot covers of all sizes with knobs to clash like cymbals, or hang lids from a cord to strike with various sticks or to tap with thimbles on fingers.
- Other instruments can be created from aluminum pie plates taped together with pebbles inside, or glasses to hold water of different depths that can be tapped to create different tones.

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A Guide to Inclusive Practice in Your Classroom

The following tips are compiled to include all children in the arts experience. Using the concepts of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Learning, they can serve as guidelines to:

- Create an inclusive environment, both in setting up the classroom and obtaining materials;
- Prepare teachers, including planning lessons and managing the classroom;
- Develop a learning process for teaching arts to students of any ability; and,
- Engage families in extending the arts activities.

There are no magic formulas for teaching arts concepts to children of all abilities. Nor is there a single strategy that works best. Instead, these tips set forth principles that are understood and incorporated by all educators.

- Each child is an individual with unique strengths, abilities, and needs.
- Each child deserves respect, acceptance, and encouragement.

- Each child needs to be challenged and supported with activities that are developmentally appropriate.
- Each child should learn in an environment that allows for a range of styles and needs.

The first section of general tips applies to all arts experiences. Then, discipline-specific tips address the most common art forms. The final section of tips provides guidance for people with specific disabilities.

Start with the Arts values the engagement of all teachers and students in arts experiences. Some educators may lack experience at teaching arts while others may be artists themselves. Some may desire basic guidance on what has worked well for other educators, or they may wish to augment what has already worked in their own classrooms. Teachers are encouraged to consider the range of approaches presented here and to adapt these tips to the needs of their own students.

People-First Language

Language shapes the way we speak and act toward one another and conveys the respect we have for others. The use of appropriate language about people with disabilities can be an important tool in building a community that accepts all people.

Appropriate language is both sensitive and accurate. *VSA arts* promotes the use of “people first” language—language that puts the focus on the individual rather than on a disability. “People first” language helps us to remember that people are unique individuals and that their abilities or disabilities are only part of who they are.

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE PHRASES	EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE PHRASES AND OTHER TERMS TO AVOID
Person with a disability	The disabled; handicapped; crippled; suffers from a disability
Person who is blind; person with a visual impairment	The blind
Person who is deaf; person with a hearing impairment	The deaf; deaf and dumb; suffers a hearing loss
Person with intellectual disabilities;	Retarded
Person with mental illness	Crazy; psycho; lunatic;
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined or restricted to a wheelchair; wheelchair bound
Person with a physical disability; person with a mobility impairment	Cripple; lame; handicapped; deformed

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Avoid euphemisms such as “physically challenged,” “special needs,” “differently abled,” and “handicapped.” Many disability groups object to these phrases because they are considered condescending and reinforce the idea that disabilities cannot be spoken of in an up front and direct manner.

Do not sensationalize a disability by using terms such as “afflicted with,” “suffers from,” or “crippled with.” These expressions are considered offensive and inaccurate to people with disabilities.

When referring to people who use wheelchairs, avoid terms such as “wheelchair bound” or “confined to a wheelchair.” Wheelchairs do not confine people with disabilities. They provide freedom of movement to assist individuals in traveling throughout the community.

When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, emphasize abilities rather than limitations, focusing on a person’s accomplishments, creative talents, or skills. This guideline does not mean avoiding mention of a person’s disability, but doing so in a respectful manner and only when relevant to the situation.

GENERAL TIPS FOR DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Preparation

The Environment

Ensure that all areas are accessible. Areas may need more space to accommodate a child using a wheelchair.

Place toys and materials on low open shelves that can be reached easily by all children, including those who are in wheelchairs or adapted chairs, or those who are positioned on the floor. Organize materials by type.

Materials

Large magnifiers
House painting brushes, foam wedges, roll-on applicators, and squeeze bottles for children with motor and coordination disabilities.

Stiff lacing, rather than shoestrings, for stringing beads.

Adaptation of Materials

For handling. Attach wooden knobs to the lids of containers, add foam pieces to the corners of book pages, and attach Velcro® fasteners to dress-up clothing and costumes.

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GENERAL TIPS FOR DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Preparation

The Environment	Materials	Adaptation of Materials
<p>Place direct lighting over work areas, and locate the art center near indirect light.</p> <p>Incorporate adapted equipment into learning centers. For example, with the advice of a physical therapist, include an adapted chair so the child with physical disabilities will feel welcomed.</p> <p>Encourage children’s interaction with each other and with objects, such as placing chairs so they face each other and arranging small work areas for two or three children.</p> <p>Provide a work surface with raised edges to prevent materials from falling on the floor. Secure trays to tables.</p> <p>Keep furniture rearrangements to a minimum. And, provide time for children to explore the room, with just you alone, whenever changes are made.</p> <p>Observe children to see if changes in the physical environment are needed to encourage independence.</p> <p>Arrange the environment to reduce distractions by separating noisy active areas from quiet areas. Use shelves and other furnishings to define areas.</p>	<p>Lazy Susans, to simplify reaching for objects.</p> <p>Safe art materials: some children with chemical sensitivities can be adversely affected by art materials such as glue, markers, starch, and tempera paint, particularly if they have odors or are sprayed. Avoid using aerosol sprays and check with the children’s families and/or physicians for materials to avoid; use reasonable substitutes. For further suggestions on safe materials, refer to <i>Teaching Art Safely to the Disabled</i> by M. McCann (1987), New York: Center for Safety in the Arts.</p>	<p>For holding. To allow children to grasp them with their full hand, shorten brush handles and use electrical tape to secure a short dowel across the end in a “T” shape. Modify paint brushes, markers, crayons, or pencils by wrapping clay, foam or cloth around them to make them thicker and easier to hold. Foam hair curlers work well.</p> <p>For stabilizing. Stabilize materials with magnetic strips, so they can be positioned on a cookie sheet. Secure materials to surfaces using suction cups, c-clamps, non-skid matting, Velcro®, or sandbags.</p> <p>For sensory contrast. Mix vanilla extract and other scents with paint. Add unusual textures to familiar materials, such as Velcro® dots to blocks and sand to finger paint. Vary the temperatures in the water table.</p>

An Inclusive Learning Process¹

Communication

- **Encourage a cooperative rather than competitive atmosphere.** In most situations “buddy systems” work well.
- **Refrain from comparisons of one child’s work, skills, or abilities with those of another.** Describe each child’s work enthusiastically.
- **Make eye contact when speaking.**

Refrain from labeling children with disabilities as “different” by having separate handouts and supplies. Instead make the adaptive materials available to all children.

As a natural part of the learning experience, encourage discussion and increase awareness of disabilities. Display pictures of people with a range of abilities, read books that include characters with disabilities, and introduce celebrities with disabilities. Invite people with disabilities to share their expertise on given topics, and learn to be comfortable asking questions! (Just ask in advance if there are any questions that your guest would prefer not to answer.)

Construct simple dolls with physical representations of disabilities (hearing aids, crutches, thick glasses, etc.) to help young children relate to these new friends.

Demonstrate enthusiasm. This can mean the difference between success and failure. If you are enjoying yourself the attitude will be contagious!

Freedom and Experimentation

The process is more important than the product. Refrain from being prescriptive about what the final product, dramatization, dance, or musical piece should be like.

Encourage creative thinking and risk taking. Much learning takes place when children know that it is okay to experiment.

Leave room for children to be surprised by their own insights. Effective learning in the arts is highly dependent on children’s discovery rather than on teacher explanations.

An Inclusive Learning Process

Offer opportunities for children to make choices in art materials they use and in the ways they express themselves. Children develop confidence as they deal with the results of their decisions.

Critical Thinking²

Involve all students in viewing, talking about, and evaluating art. The following questions will develop their observational and analytical skills.

1. Description: *What do you see/hear?*

The student takes an initial inventory of what is seen. At this first perceptual level a consensus should be reached that can be referred to in succeeding stages. Description involves noting objects, shapes, colors, and other items with which the individual has probably had some prior experience. For performing arts, the description would involve time, space, number of performers, rhythms, or stories, as well as other elements such as costumes, sets, and props.

2. Formal Analysis: *How are things put together?*

This more formal review has a perceptual basis but it takes place at a deeper level. Students begin to analyze the makeup or composition of an art work. The individual who can distinguish between symmetry and asymmetry, describe the nature of the material, and be sensitive to the kinds and qualities of color and line can comment about the form of an art work. In performing arts, they can distinguish between speed, such as fast and slow; groupings such as solos, duets, and larger ensembles; progression from beginning to end; and type of movement, sound, or story.

3. Interpretation: *What is the artist trying to say?*

In the interpretive stage the individual is asked to think about the meaning of the painting. To do this the individual is required to establish some connection between the structure that can be discerned in a particular painting or performance and the intent of the artist.

4. Judgment: *What do you think of it?*

The final judgmental phase is the most complex because it requires individuals to render their opinion regarding the worth of an object, basing that opinion on what they have

An Inclusive Learning Process

learned in the previous stages. Such questions as the following are asked: “Are you moved by this work of art?” “How do you feel about it?” “Would you like to own it or hang it in your room, or would you like to see it again?” “Do you dislike it?”

Time and Structure

Be consistent with instructions, routines, and expectations. Simple procedures, once learned, help children to work independently.

Plan for transitions, and minimize the time that children are idle and waiting.

Announce, in advance, time for cleanup or changes in activities to give children a chance to adjust. Prepare materials in advance, and plan alternative activities for subgroups. While some children are washing hands, those waiting may be singing a song.

Use signals to gain attention. For example, use a “secret code word,” a song, a clapping pattern and bells, music selections, blinking lights, or an ASL sign. The key to success is being consistent with the signal and its meaning. Use music and sound in creative ways to gain attention, such as a small chime or a hand drum.

Differentiated Learning³

Utilize the principles of differentiated learning as an aid in enhancing the arts experience for children of all abilities. “At its most basic level, differentiation consists of the efforts of teachers to respond to variance among learners in the classroom. Whenever a teacher reaches out to an individual or small group to vary his or her teaching in order to create the best learning experience possible, that teacher is differentiating instruction” (Tomlinson).

Differentiating content refers to varying what the students need to learn or how the students will access the information by: (1) using written and visual materials at varying readability levels, such as displaying one poster with the words of a play or script and another with icons representing words; (2) playing and making available books on tape; (3) presenting ideas through both visual and auditory means, such as playing a song and displaying its words on a poster; (4) using buddies for drama and dance and creative movement activities; and (5) meeting with small groups to re-teach an idea or skill or to extend the activity, such as spending

An Inclusive Learning Process

one-on-one time assisting a student with a visual arts project or challenging the student to try something new with it.

Differentiating process refers to varying activities in which the students engage in order to make sense of or master the content by: (1) using tiered activities where students work with the same important skills and understandings but have different levels of support, challenge, or complexity, such as giving an open-ended dance/creative movement direction to move a part of the body in any way they can or wish; (2) providing centers – costume corner, library, listening station, and visual arts center – that encourage students to explore arts activities of particular interest to them; (3) offering manipulatives or other hands-on supports for students who need them, such as providing scarves to wave or supports to lean on during a dance and creative movement lesson; and (4) varying the length of time a student may take to complete an art activity to provide additional support and time for greater exploration.

Differentiating products refers to varying the nature of culminating projects that ask the students to rehearse, apply, and extend what they have learned by: (1) giving students options of how to express their thoughts and ideas, such as creating a puppet show, writing a letter, or making a mural; (2) allowing students to work alone or in small groups on their arts projects; and (3) encouraging students to create their own ideas rather than prescribing the details of each project or arts activity.

Differentiating the learning environment refers to varying the way the classroom looks, works, and feels by: (1) ensuring there are places where students can work quietly without distraction on arts projects and places where students can collaborate and work together; (2) providing materials that reflect a variety of cultures and home settings, such as including clothes from different countries in the costume corner; (3) matching independent work with individual needs, such as allowing students to select their own set of materials for an art project; and (4) providing options for students to either move around or sit quietly, such as allowing a physically active student to walk around during a visual arts lesson and permitting a more introverted student to observe a drama activity instead of participating.

GENERAL TIPS FOR DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Family Tips

Orientation. An orientation session and demonstration of a lesson will share program goals with families and get their input.

Art Boxes. Show families sample art, creative dramatics, dance, and music boxes and encourage them to create art boxes at home. Refer to the introduction for items to include in each box.

Lending Library. With families, create a library of books about art and arts activities.

Set up a Children's Gallery and Theater to display works. Invite families to performances and to view the gallery during intermission.

Community Showcase. Take excerpt or products from art lessons to public libraries, community art shows, and other special events.

¹ Some of the ideas for developing an inclusive environment came from Wesley, P. W., Dennis, B. C., and Tyndall, S. T. 1998. [*QuickNotes: Inclusion Resources for Early Childhood Professionals.*] Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Press.

² The stages of the critical process are adapted from Gaitskell, C. and Hurwitz, A. 1975. [*Children and Their Art.*] New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

³ Elements of differentiated learning are adapted from Tomlinson, Carol A. 2003-2004. *Differentiation of Instruction in the Elementary Grades.* [*ERIC Digest*]. (accessed May 28, 2008). Retrieved 28 May 2008 <http://www.ericdigests.org/2001-2/elementary.html>.

GENERAL TIPS FOR DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Preparation

The Environment

Create a space for movement. Arrange a dance space that is large, clean, and clear of furniture and other obstacles. Be sure the space is well-lit and that the floor is not slippery. It may be useful to have a barre, or ledge, on the side to support students with limited motor abilities.

Provide age-appropriate music with varied rhythms and speeds. Lyrics can give verbal cues for the movement, and instrumental music will encourage free movement.

Find books and DVDs that show different dance styles, as well as dancers with mixed abilities.

Take the time to increase your own comfort level with movement. The more comfortable you are, the more the class will be. Take a dance course at a local studio.

Lesson Structure

Be consistent with the structure of the lessons. Communicate ground rules such as not running or touching others during the lesson. Lessons should first teach a movement principle or step and then apply it in a longer sequence.

Start lessons with a **warm-up**, or a slow sequence of movements that incorporate stretching and simple steps.

Build the sequence of movements from **simple** (such as walking) to **complex** (such as varying rhythms or patterns).

Wrap up each lesson with a **culminating activity** or learning summary.

End with a **“cool-down”** of gradually slowing movement to slow the heart rate and return the focus to the classroom.

Class Management

Ask questions. Engage children’s thinking about their impressions as well as what they are doing. Ask for their general observations, and tailor some questions to the lesson (such as the pattern, speed, rhythm, timing, etc.).

Change dynamics. Alternate vigorous and slow movements.

Change spatial arrangements. The class can warm-up in a circle, dance all together, or take turns moving across the space.

Vary activities. If the class has been moving in unison, change to using partners or groups. Take turns having half the group dance while the other half observes.

GENERAL TIPS FOR DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Preparation

The Environment

Dance to your favorite songs at home. Try out your lesson plan on a friend ahead of time.

Lesson Structure

Give students choices in how, and how much, they participate. Allow them to move or watch according to their comfort level.

Class Management

Use signals to help with transitions. An instrument or another audible cue (such as a clap or vocal sound) will alert children that it is time to “stop” and wait for the next direction.

AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING PROCESS

Schedule dance and movement activities on a consistent basis. Children will enjoy repetition in their lessons; activities such as Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes and Freeze Dance can be done often.

Use movement to develop a variety of skills. Skills can include taking turns, working together, and increasing spatial awareness.

Praise enthusiastic participants. This will encourage more reluctant or shy children to get involved. Often children are more apt to imitate behavior and learn from their peers than from adults. Avoid drawing extra attention to children who are hesitant to participate.

Use a range of lessons. Some may teach students about specific movement concepts such as patterns and steps (such as “move your hand every time you hear the drum beat”), while others may encourage free expression (such as “move your body as if you are light as a feather”).

Create lessons that readily adapt to a range of physical abilities. Simple directions such as lean forward or reach to the sky can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Using the same rhythm, some can march with their feet while others can use their arms or hands.

Consider having a “buddy system” for children with physical disabilities. Make sure that the child with a disability gives permission for another classmate to assist.

Refer to the individual Dance and Creative Movement lessons. Lessons include more ideas and tips about including children with a wide range of abilities.

CREATIVE DRAMATICS

Preparation

The Environment

Set up a costume corner.

A shelf with labeled boxes helps to keep the drama center organized when it is time to clean up.

Organize an area for story boxes for children's independent dramatic activities.

Each labeled box contains a copy of the story and masks and props to help children get started. One box might contain the story "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," along with bear noses or masks, a wig, three bowls, three spoons, and reading cards labeled: "too hot," "too cold," "too hard," "too soft," and "just right."

Materials

Dress-up clothes, including scarves, hats, accessories, seasonal items, like mittens, and a piece of cloth for children to create their own impromptu costumes.

Scenery materials, including large pieces of foam core, cardboard, cardboard boxes, and textured paint.

Adaptation of Materials

Adapt costumes as needed. Construct costumes to facilitate independent use by children with motor disabilities. Attach Velcro® fasteners as described in "General Tips."

Help children construct and decorate scenery.

Using foam core, cardboard, and/or cardboard boxes, create trees, bushes, buildings, and vehicles. Use textured paint to add tactile dimension for children with visual disabilities.

An Inclusive Learning Process

Value each student's contribution to the activity, large or small. Some students may be enthusiastic participants while others are more inhibited: all should be recognized and appreciated.

Allow enough time for children to plan, think, and act. Most drama activities require children to make decisions about characters, the sequence of events, and the actions performed.

Participate yourself. Children's experiences will be enhanced by your active involvement and enthusiasm.

CREATIVE DRAMATICS

An Inclusive Learning Process

Manage children's behaviors. Redirect children if they begin to mimic or mock others. If they become overly stimulated, move to a calmer activity.

Refer to the individual Creative Dramatics lessons. Lessons include more ideas and tips about including children with a wide range of abilities.

LITERACY

Preparation

The Environment

Set up a library and quiet reading corner. Include a variety of children's books, handmade books, Class Books, and reference books related to the arts and other classroom experiences.

Materials

A variety of books. Most of the children's book selections listed can be found in school and public libraries, in bookstores, and on the Internet.

Adaptation of Materials

Provide books on tape. Children with substantial visual disabilities may enjoy having these at a listening station. Sighted children will also enjoy listening to the words while they look at the book.

An Inclusive Learning Process

Reading can take place at any time. Read or have children read before, during, after, or before and after the lesson.

Read selections more than once within the same lesson. Each time, have a different emphasis. The first time may focus on the storyline; the second may focus on the illustrations and how they were created.

Revisit favorite selections in future lessons. Weeks after the original lesson, rereading a selection will bring back good memories.

DRAMA

An Inclusive Learning Process

Manage children’s behaviors. Redirect children if they begin to mimic or mock others. If they become overly stimulated, move to a calmer activity.

Refer to the individual Creative Dramatics lessons. Lessons include more ideas and tips about including children with a wide range of abilities.

LITERACY

Preparation

An Inclusive Learning Process

Vary the way books are “read” and “listened to.” Some books may be sung or told in a whisper. Children may want to dance the story as it is read or act out different parts. Some books may be “read” by a puppet or in a variety of different voices. Use ASL to “tell” the story as it is read aloud.

Create and read Class Books. These books will have a special meaning to children as they are the authors and the illustrators! Read them to the class regularly. “Extending the Experience” activities in the individual lessons provide ideas for making Class Books.

Encourage family members to read aloud with children. Whether parents, guardians, older siblings, grandparents, babysitters, or friends, family members may want to write and illustrate their own stories. They can use a notebook or scrapbook, staple pages together, and/or use computer software for writing and making their own books.

MUSIC

Preparation

The Environment

Display the words to familiar songs on posters or easels. This provides effective reading material for emergent readers.

Display picture cards with simple illustrations that represent favorite songs so that children with cognitive disabilities or speech delays can communicate their selections by pointing.

Designate a storage place for musical instruments. When not in use, they should be kept in a safe place to ensure a quiet and orderly classroom.

Materials

A recording collection of a broad range of music. Start with a few tried and true, best-loved artists and include music from a variety of cultures, countries, styles, and genres. Consider different versions of the same tune.

Homemade musical instruments. Include wooden objects, shakers from containers filled with objects, bells, wind instruments, old kitchen utensils, pieces of pipe, drum substitutes, cymbals, and a variety of instruments made from found objects.

Adaptation of Materials

Become comfortable with singing aloud. If you feel limited as a singer (though most people are not!) or need a boost of confidence, find a selection of children's tapes and sing along with them regularly: in the shower, around the house, or while driving.

Consider the music specialist as a valuable resource. Ask for guidance, assistance, and recommendations about effective activities, recordings, and music teaching tips.

Select songs with simple lyrics to teach. Use songs that are more complicated for sing-alongs.

An Inclusive Learning Process

Give children choices in the ways they can participate. Students can play an instrument, sing, clap, or watch depending on their comfort level. Some students may like to try new instruments while others may prefer to select the same one each lesson; allow and encourage both preferences.

Be careful not to single students out. Some students may enjoy the spotlight while others may not be comfortable performing for their peers.

MUSIC

An Inclusive Learning Process

Incorporate singing throughout the school day's activities. You will be expanding children's learning experiences as singing and speaking use two different parts of the brain.

Use music to set the mood for classroom activities. Select appropriate pieces to start, end, and/or add to lessons.

Let children know that songs are alive! There is no "right way" or "right words" for any song. Encourage children to make up their own verses to familiar songs.

Establish the value and importance of class instruments. Encourage children to treat all instruments, including homemade and found objects, as real instruments by creating rituals for their use.

Use rhythm to help focus children's attention. A clapping session, for instance, in which children echo the educator's claps, may help to calm the entire class. Create rhythms using all parts of the body such as hand clapping, knee patting, shoulder tapping, and finger snapping.

Teach new songs one verse at a time. Wait until children have mastered one verse before moving on to another.

Teach all children to use ASL to sign simple songs.

Refer to the individual Music lessons. Lessons include more ideas and tips about including children with a wide range of abilities.

VISUAL ARTS

Preparation

The Environment

Label shelves and storage containers for arts supplies with words and pictures. This will help children clean up independently.

Plan storage space for projects that take more than one session or require time to dry. Providing a space where children's creations can be kept safe and undamaged tells them that their work is valued.

Materials

A variety of age-appropriate drawing utensils in thick and thin sizes. Include pencils, crayons, colored pencils, scented and unscented markers, and chalk.

A variety of paper. Choose for sensory variation light and dark contrasting paper and shiny and sparkling paper.

Adaptation of Materials

Modify drawing utensils. Adapt as needed to make the handles easier to hold.

Keep crayons in containers rather than in crayon boxes. Children can select colors more easily. (Broken crayons are okay!) Take paper off crayons so they can be used on the sides.

Maintain scrap boxes in either cardboard or plastic bins. Have separate boxes for paper scraps, magazine pages and/or scraps, cloth scraps, yarn, ribbon, buttons and chenille stems for collages, sculptures, and mixed media projects.

An Inclusive Learning Process

Refrain from using adult examples or models of the art project for children to imitate. Children may view them as the "right way" and try to copy them instead of developing their own means of expression.

Understand children's developmental stages. Realize that artwork that may appear as scribbling is appropriate for them. Value all efforts equally.

VISUAL ARTS

An Inclusive Learning Process

Use open-ended questions to talk with children about their artwork. Rather than asking “What is this?” ask “Would you like to tell me about your work?”

Pair students of differing abilities to work on a project together. The child with greater ability in a particular area can assist the child whose abilities are not as great.

CHILDREN WITH LIMITED DEXTERITY, MOTOR DISABILITIES, AND PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

**Refer also to General Tips for Developing an Inclusive Learning Environment.*

Preparation

Visual Arts

Adaptations for handling. Attach wooden knobs to the lids of supply containers, and apply Velcro® to wood strips (for children who have difficulty gluing).

Adaptations for holding. To allow children to grasp them with their full hand, shorten brush handles and use electrical tape to secure a short dowel across the end in a “T” shape. Modify paint brushes, markers, crayons, or pencils by wrapping foam, cloth, white sports tape, bicycle handgrip tape, modeling clay, or plasticene to thicken the tool handle. (Modeling clay and plasticene are good for this as they follow the unique contours of a student’s hand. Foam hair curlers also work well.) Adapt printmaking tools by adding knobs or handles to them.

Performing Arts

General

Make sure children are fully included. Try not to isolate student who have disabilities with “special” rules and environments. Ask the same of them as you would any child. Do not avoid words, topics, or areas because you think a child cannot do the activity.

Dance and Creative Movement and Creative Dramatics

Use terms that are open and broad. For example, say “reach for the sky” rather than specifics such as “march on tiptoes.”

Encourage all children to move from one place to another. Children using wheelchairs can move in different pathways, in different directions, and do different beats and dynamics. Upper body, arms, and hands can move as alternate versions of legs.

Visual Arts

Adaptations for stabilizing. Stabilize materials with magnetic strips so they can be positioned on a cookie sheet. Secure materials to surfaces using suction cups, c-clamps, non-skid matting, Velcro®, or sandbags. Stabilize pie pans of paint by taping the pan to the table with a strip of heavy-duty tape.

Adaptive supplies to acquire. Select from the following materials as appropriate to your arts projects: large magnifiers, stiff lacing (rather than shoestrings for stringing beads), Lazy Susans (to simplify reaching for objects), house painting brushes; foam wedges; roll-on applicators; squeeze bottles; hand rollers to flatten clay (because they can be used with one hand); rolling pins; adaptive squeeze scissors (called “spring scissors”); custom self-opening scissors (with large loops and spring action to make them self-opening for one- or two-hand cutting); stamps and cookie cutters with grips; self-stick colored dots or stickers; large collage materials such as ribbon, yarn, and fabric; wheelchair easels or lap trays (that include a pencil holder, wrist rest, pouch for arts supplies, and possibly scoot guards or Velcro® to hold items in tray); and a variety of fastening materials.

Adaptations for students without the use of their arms. Use homemade or purchased headgear to hold tools to allow them to hold a brush; attach a rubber spatula to the end of a brush to create a comfortable mouth painting tool.

Performing Arts

Consider moving a child’s limbs in a therapeutic way that has been taught by the child’s family or therapist. Although some children cannot “get up and dance”, each child can participate in his or her own unique way.

Consider a “buddy system.” Make sure that the child with a disability gives permission for the able-bodied classmate to assist.

Music

Have available various instruments. Include instruments that can be played with one hand and/or with little movement. Have wrist bells available for children who have trouble grasping.

Modify instruments as needed. Attach bells to the wheels of wheelchairs or scooters. Attach rain sticks to a limb or wheel with a simple Velcro® strap. Add extra support to drumsticks by strapping them onto hands with Velcro®.

Visual Arts

Adaptation for foot painters and sculptors. Construct an art slipper from wood and leather that fits over the shoe and can be attached to the front of the slipper by drilling holes in the wood.

Adaptation for those without fine dexterity but with limited use of their hands. Construct a cuff that can fasten a brush or tool to the hand.

Adaptations for students with limited fine motor control. Fill empty roll-on deodorant bottles with paint to create a painting tool that is easy to maneuver. Also, wrap sticks around the roller of a polling paint brush to create unique textures. Avoid very small collage items that may be difficult to pick up. Assist by spreading glue where the child wishes to add collage materials.

CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE VISION DISABILITIES

**Refer also to General Tips for Developing an Inclusive Learning Environment.*

Visual Arts and Literacy

Adaptive supplies to acquire. Select from the following materials as appropriate to your arts projects: gel paint (because it leaves a raised bead when dry, providing tactile definition); textured paint; tempera paint with sand added; scented markers; high-contrast paper (light, dark, shiny, and sparkling paper); large magnifiers; and collage materials that create a textured surface (such as cotton balls and crumpled tissue paper).

Adaptation for differentiation. Use bold colors and/or textures that are easily distinguished.

Adaptation for accessibility. Line up art materials in open containers or trays in a particular order. Tell children which material is first, second, and third.

Adaptation to help define boundaries. Place the drawing paper inside a tray with raised edges.

Adaptation to help students feel the difference between the top and bottom of a piece of paper. Notch papers on one corner.

Adaptation to create a relief effect that can be felt with fingers. Place screen, cardboard, rubber matting, heavy cloth, or other textured surfaces beneath the students' drawing paper.

Performing Arts

General

Always notify a child who is blind that you are leaving him or her before walking away. Make sure other children identify themselves before speaking.

Dance and Creative Movement and Creative Dramatics

Involve students in verbally describing movement activities.

Use auditory cues such as music to indicate the beginning and end of performances. Define children's personal performance space. Use thick cord taped to the floor in either circles or squares. Students can feel the edge of their movement space with their feet.

Extend a rope from one wall to the other to serve as a guide that children can move along. Consider a "buddy system." Make sure that the child with the disability gives permission for the able-bodied classmate to assist.

CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE VISION DISABILITIES

**Refer also to General Tips for Developing an Inclusive Learning Environment.*

Visual Arts and Literacy

Tape recorder and books on tape. Provide a tape recorder for children to “record” a drawing, such as an oral portrait. Allow time for them to practice what they want to record. Give suggestions such as: “Describe your hair, your height, the way you sit, and the way you move.” Provide books on tape at a listening station.

CHILDREN WITH HEARING DISABILITIES

**Refer also to General Tips for Developing an Inclusive Learning Environment.*

Visual Arts and Literacy

Make sure children are looking at you and paying attention before giving instructions.

Include many visual props. This will enhance the meaning of the songs and activities.

Use pictures to illustrate a story.

Provide visual cues. For example, use red and green cards to indicate the drumbeat or when the music starts or stops.

Write out the words of songs on the chalkboard or easel pad.

Add visual cues to stories. For example, quickly shine a flashlight to indicate lightning.

Performing Arts

General

Speak directly to a person who is deaf, not his or her sign language interpreter.

Do not let children play with a companion or guide dog. They are working and should not be distracted.

Music

Face children and play the rhythm of the music on a drum in their view.

Invite them to feel the drum vibrate.

Provide headphones. Some children may prefer listening to music through them.

Invite children to sit close to the speakers. They can feel the vibration as the music is played.

CHILDREN WITH HEARING DISABILITIES

**Refer also to General Tips for Developing an Inclusive Learning Environment.*

Visual Arts and Literacy

Remember that children may require their sight to follow along with an activity. Having children close their eyes or even dimming the lights too low may inhibit or even prevent their participation.

Performing Arts

Encourage participation in class songs. Allow children to sing along whenever possible, sing along in sign language, or play along with a musical instrument.

CHILDREN WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

**Refer also to General Tips for Developing an Inclusive Learning Environment.*

General

Set out materials in the order in which they will be used. This will help children plan what to do first, next, and last.

Give instructions one step at a time. Praise each completed step then continue with the next one.

Provide safe opportunities for children to touch warm and cold objects to differentiate temperatures.

Suggest parameters for visual arts lessons. Give children more specific ideas for subject matter; for instance, “What I Like to Do ___ (on the playground, with my family, in the summer, etc.).”

Performing Arts

Dance and Creative Movement and Creative Dramatics

Break up stories into small sections. Stop between sections to summarize and ask questions. Check for comprehension before reading or telling the next section.

Use multi-sensory props when telling a story or conducting a drama lesson. Consider tactile, auditory, and visual props along with props that incorporate children’s sense of smell.

Demonstrate dance movements. Give children only one or two movements to focus on at a time. Build sequences gradually.

Music

Provide picture cards that represent favorite songs. Children can communicate their selections by pointing.

CHILDREN WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

**Refer also to General Tips for Developing an Inclusive Learning Environment.*

Performing Arts

Tape large shapes or color cutouts to the floor for each child. These can serve as a starting and ending spot for dance and movement activities.

CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES

**Refer also to General Tips for Developing an Inclusive Learning Environment*

General

Set appropriate expectations and boundaries, and make sure children know and understand them. Focus on the desired behaviors rather than telling children what not to do. Consistency is important for all children and particularly for children with behavioral issues.

Praise and encouragement will reinforce positive behavior.

Commenting on effort, cooperation, and appropriate expressions will encourage children to seek recognition and attention in constructive ways.

Offer a range of choices in all activities so that children feel secure that they can participate.

Keep consequences for inappropriate behavior clear. These should be consistent with the general classroom routine. At all times, difficult behavior should be dealt with calmly and in a matter-of-fact manner, so that escalation of emotional outbursts is avoided as much as possible.

Performing Arts

When conducting drama and other lessons that involve expressions of feelings, be aware of any traumatic events in children's lives. Take care not to cause them distress during pantomime, dramatizations, role-playing, or dance.

Pair children with others or have them perform with small groups. Some children may feel uncomfortable in the spotlight.

Some children may prefer to assist with stopping and starting music or helping with other cues, rather than directly participating in drama.