

## **Introduction to Inclusion in Visual Arts Education**

The National Core Arts Standards for Visual Art and their accompanying Model Cornerstone Assessment (MCA) allow the structured flexibility for meeting the needs of a diverse student audience. This agile approach to the MCA is necessary for including those experiencing a range of (dis)abilities, from gifted-and-talented to moderate and severe disabilities, within the visual art classroom. Regardless of (dis)ability, most students will be able to achieve the goals set forth in the National Core Arts Standards for Visual Art, as long as art educators are working collaboratively with them, their special educators, their parents, and paraeducators toward implementing inclusion strategies to meet special educational needs. VSA/Accessibility Arts and Special Education consultant Sharon Malley (2014) offers guidelines for arts teachers for teaching and assessing students experiencing disabilities. These include:

- Maintain high expectations
- Promote communicative competence
- Use the principles of Universal Design for Learning
- Know how to select and use appropriate accommodations for individual learners
- Make use of evidence-based practices
- Target instruction and use formative indicators of student performance.  
Explanations for each guideline will be provided (p. 8)

The special education mandate holds that students experiencing disabilities must be provided an appropriate education, individualized to meet his or her particular educational needs. Therefore, it is important that the inclusive art educator (a) knows and understands the student's individualized education program (IEP) and (b) works alongside the special educator in devising inclusion and assessment strategies toward educating students in the least restrictive environment. The principles for Universal Design in Learning (UDL) are helpful to art teachers in envisioning educational strategies and assessments that include all learners. UDL principles include:

- Representing information in multiple formats and media
- Providing multiple pathways for students' actions and expressions
- Providing multiple ways to engage students' interests and motivation
- Providing collective access and interdependency
- Addressing intersectional forms of exclusion produced by inaccessible design

Art teachers who are respectful of differences and who seek to provide a fully inclusive educational community may choose to view their classrooms as sites of participatory action research. In this way, they continually document, evaluate, and interpret their teaching approaches, and student learning, reflecting upon ways to modify educational practices toward the inclusion of all. Included here are some inclusion and assessment strategies that are in keeping with principles for UDL and aligned with the National Core Arts Standards for Visual Art.

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### **Model Cornerstone Assessment: Creating (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**

- Participate in the IEP development process to ensure art-instructional considerations are included.
- Modify tools and materials for use by students with disabilities.
- Use assistive technology such as:
  - grips (e.g., pencils wrapped in a thick kneaded eraser or Styrofoam ball)
  - fasteners (such as Velcro)
  - non-skid materials
  - extensions for reach (like sticks or rods)
  - holes or pockets in tables for placing paint or water containers
  - other solutions may include high-tech devices, such as screen readers, voice activation, touch screens, Braille or other modified keyboards, and switches (e.g., button, sip/puff, etc.)

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- Take an ecological perspective and focus on factors external to the student that may be adjusted.
- Present information in a variety of formats with attention to multi-modal approaches.
- Use assistive technologies and interventions that enable students to be as participatory as possible in their art making and learning.
- Use the ABC Model: *augment* abilities and *bypass*, or *compensate* for (dis)abilities.
- Organize workspace by arranging materials to be identified by touch rather than sight.
- Adjust height specifications to accommodate a wheelchair.
- Use sound and touch to communicate if a student perceives through hearing and touch with only slight movement in fingers and no speech or vision.
- Modify painting approaches to include the use of stencils, or thicken paint with sand to differentiate color, or provide greater tactile range for students with vision or movement differences.
- Adjust timelines to provide additional time for students to complete work.

### **Model Cornerstone Assessment: Presenting (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**

- Provide various means through which students with disabilities can communicate their ideas or questions.
- Include non-verbal means to engage students who communicate best through action, rather than words.
- Create alternative spaces for exhibition with a recording device such as VoiceThread®, which enables students to display their artwork and to audio-record responses.
- Create tactually-oriented exhibition.

### **Model Cornerstone Assessment: Responding/Connecting (2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**

- Provide varying means through which students can express what they have learned.
- Allow for instructional pacing variation, kinesthetic strategies, peer teaching, sequencing processes into small components, role-play or other empathetic processes, and tactile and manipulative methods, in meeting a variety of student needs.
- Encourage students with high ability to modify or interpret outcomes to capture greater levels of complexity or sophistication in interpretations of ideas or topics.
- Create social and instructional supports that include all stakeholders, particularly all students in the art class who are working with special educators, to discuss strategies for inclusion of all learners.

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*Inclusion Strategies from:* Kraft, M., & Keifer-Boyd, K. (2013). *Including difference: A communitarian approach to art education in the least restrictive environment*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

*Additional Resources:*

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