



# ADVICE ON ART THEORY AND PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

## General Objective

The main objective of this practical sheet is to assist in all possible ways to introduce art theory and movements to students with SLD. It will present ways and techniques for use by the teachers to support them in their teaching efforts.

In this practical sheet, you will:

- ✓ Understand what is art.
- ✓ Present the main art movements
- ✓ Techniques to use in workshops

## You will need:

- ✓ Paper or digital media for keeping notes
- ✓ Device with internet access for searching and storing information

## Challenges and issues

Art has been used since the dawn of man to help people convey ideas. And it can do the same today for a learning-different child.

A feeling of self-worth - the knowledge that you can do something - is a critical part of the learning process. Students with learning disabilities often come to think they are incapable of learning because of their ongoing difficulties in school. A paintbrush, a costume, a drum or paper, scissors and



glue can be new tools for self-expression that boost confidence while providing opportunities for learning and practice.

Drawing and painting reinforce motor skills and can also be a way of learning shapes, contrasts, boundaries, spatial relationships, size and other math concepts.

Music teaches students about rhythm, sound and pitch. Using repetitive songs to learn academic facts (like the alphabet song or multiplication tables) can make the learning experience easier and more fun.

Dance provides students with a social way to learn about sequencing, rhythm and following directions. While developing coordination and motor control, students can also learn counting and directionality, which can enhance reading and writing concepts - such as understanding the difference between similar looking letters (like p/b/d/q) and telling left from right.

Performing plays is an opportunity for students to immerse themselves in a theme and learn about it in a profound and personal way. Acting out historical or literary figures and events gives students a sense of ownership about what they've learned, allowing them to acquire a deeper appreciation of the subject matter.

Crafts offer students the opportunity to express themselves in two- and three-dimensional ways. Students can develop vital problem-solving skills without having to rely on areas of expression that may be more challenging.

## Adaptation

Recent research in the visual arts has resulted in the development of a range of methods for assessing student learning. Theoretically based in cognitive conceptions of learning, assessment systems have been applied in practice.

The visual arts can be seen as a communication system in its own right. Drawing is central to the language of art. Mark-making is one of the first outward presentations made by most young children. The student who



develops confidence in drawing and gains an understanding that graphic representations symbolize and convey meaning can enjoy the multitude of uses of this strand. Drawing can be employed as a means of expressing and recording ideas, experiences, imaginings, observations, and feelings. It may also be possible to interpret and use such expression.

Clay offers the student a range of possibilities. Its malleable quality renders it ideal for the manipulation of form and the exploration of texture. In clay the student can find a springboard for creative expression that can liberate him/her from the purely conceptual aspects of the curriculum. This encourages greater perceptual learning. Clay provides clear opportunities for the student to learn about features of visual arts that pertain to the functional aspect of art, the expressive potential of art, and the importance of the processes of designing and making art.

The aims of the visual arts curriculum are to:

- help the student to develop a sensitivity to the environment
- provide the student with aesthetic experiences that, in turn, develop understanding of universal and cultural concepts
- offer the student an alternative mode of expression, with its own visual, tactile and symbolic language
- enhance the student's understanding of art processes and responding to or 'reading' art
- provide the student with sufficient visual literacy skills so that exploration of materials and techniques leads to expression and inventiveness
- enable the student to experience the excitement and fulfillment of creative endeavor
- foster sensitivity towards and appreciation of the expressive, aesthetic and functional aspects of the visual arts through exploration of the work of artists and craftspeople



- promote the student's understanding of the concept that we are all artists.

In case of communication and language difficulties work on the concept that a picture/painting/sculpture is 'talking' to us, as in an advertisement etc. Instructions should be clear and the teacher should ascertain that the student has understood. Activities can be broken down into step-by-step stages that are described and demonstrated by the teacher. Anticipate difficulties and intervene using positive interjections, such as 'That's coming on, do you need a little help? Create a warm classroom environment that fosters respect for one another and that encourages the student to take risks with his/her artwork.

In case of short-term memory describe and carry out more complex tasks one step at a time. Allow the student enough time to finish each stage and provide plenty of opportunities for reinforcement. Use images, objects and word cards where appropriate. Use story, songs, poetry, and images to help the student to recall and visualize scenes, people, places, and creatures as subject matter. Remember, the imagination is fueled by experiences.

In case of short attention span break down tasks into a series of stages. Visit the student during each stage and probe the students about what they are doing, asking them to explain what they are making, how they are making it, etc. Ask the student to look at other students' work with you, and ask him/her to comment on it. Show his/her work to the class and ask him/her to talk about it. When the student is at the point of giving up encourage him/her to talk about, add to, or help mount/frame/exhibit the work. Tailor the task to the student's attention level, working on a smaller scale or involving him/her in a group.

In case of spatial awareness enhance self-awareness/self-concept through direct exploration of self, through dance and movement and by examining 'Who am I?' and 'What I can do?', using photographs, life stories, life line,

projects on 'me', etc. Give the student plenty of opportunities for multi-sensory stimulation and learning.

When teaching about 2D and 3D shapes, provide the student with tangible examples. Examine pictures with the student and ask questions such as, 'How do you know the boy is far in the distance?' and 'Who is nearer, the boy or the girl...?' How do you know? Teach the vocabulary of space, such as wide, behind, in front of, beside, underneath, between, etc., and use images and objects to support this learning.

Example of an activity:

### Paint and Color



Renoir. (1876). Girl with a watering can, Painting, oil on canvas, 73 x 100 cm, Impressionism, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, US

Look at and respond to the work of another artist.

Paint in the style of another artist. Look at paintings of people by Renoir, for example 'The Swing', 'A Girl with a Watering Can', 'Le Moulin de La Galette'. Look at the way he used paint to create the flow of fabric, the folds, frills, patterns, and shadows in clothes. How do clothes in the distance appear?

Try painting a picture of a person or crowd from the same historical period as the artist and paint in the artist's style using paint or pastels. More examples of paintings and other artists can be found at <https://www.europeana.eu>



## Practical examples and inspiration

The student with mild general learning disabilities needs to have the basics of communication and learning explicitly presented to him/her, and needs to be afforded maximum opportunities for learning. In practical terms, the teacher should concern himself/herself with creating contexts for art learning that are relevant to the student's overall learning and that also allow the visual arts to inhabit the domain that is embodied in the phrase art for art's sake. In the same way that words are all around us, so too are visual images.

The graphic quality of art can be explored in the making of books, posters, magazines, and greetings cards; and in responding to advertisements and a variety of media.

By making art and looking at/responding to art, the communicative and expressive characteristics of it are understood; art is a visual language in its own right. It is imperative that the student develops visual literacy skills and assimilates the symbolic nature of visual art, so that he/she may interpret the world around him/her and be able to communicate, even when oral or written language do not provide effective communication options. For example, by training the student to assess typefaces and lettering styles the student can know a comic book from a book of prose. By understanding the meaning attached to paintings from European heritage he/she can understand basic meanings, tell the difference between artists and techniques and can get excited by the painting or a book about a famous artist.

An activity that can be introduced is one of painting and coloring the seasons. Become sensitive to increasingly subtle color differences and tonal variations in natural and manufactured objects. View seasonal paintings by different artists. Look at the colors used, the paint used, etc. Choose a season, choose colors, and create a painting.



*Stredoeurópsky kopista z 2. polovice 18. storočia (Spring and Winter)*



### Additional resources

- Visual Arts Guidelines for Teachers of Students with MILD General Learning Disabilities
- Engaging Exceptional Students Through Art Activities Eric Lowe
- [European Agency](#)

