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VSA Texas

www.vsatx.org

3710 Cedar Street #7

Austin, Texas 78705

(512) 454-9912



New Media Arts



Young adults with disabilities in transition from high school to post-secondary opportunities want and need current and relevant training to enhance both their social roles and competencies. The **New Media Arts** project focuses on both new media arts skill enhancement and pre-employment skills. It is an effective blend of carefully selected, inclusive learning activities that provide for both social role and competency enhancement. Empirical, observational and anecdotal evidence substantiates this claim.

Each learning activity in the project curriculum was scrutinized for its potential to positively impact the social role and competency of the student. Careful consideration was placed on the age and cultural appropriateness of the activity, setting, and presentation and facilitation techniques. New Media Arts as a vehicle for transition to employment learning was chosen because of the perceived wide range of activity, skill training and hands-on student project options.

New media technology is an integral part of today's life and links well to future education, career and community life options for students facing transition from high school to life beyond school. Some students with disabilities are



‘visual thinkers.’ These young adults have an untapped asset, a depth of knowledge and keen interest in new media, specifically videos/movies, video games and music. New Media Arts appeared to be a potential success-based training path especially well-suited for a curriculum focused on transition to future post-secondary education, employment, volunteer, and community inclusion options. This proved to be true, with various links made to community businesses including: community television and radio, film production houses, film festivals, independent film makers, voice over actors, professional photographers, photography galleries, art house film events and disability film festivals.

The New Media Arts curriculum and classes were developed and facilitated within the guidelines of andragogical methods as applied judiciously to fit the learner’s current level of self-direction. This translates to student directed learning and choices within a parameter set by the facilitator.



In conventional education the [learner] is required to adjust himself to an established curriculum... Too much of learning consists of vicarious substitution of someone else’s experience and knowledge. Psychology teaches us that we learn what we do... Experience is the adult learner’s living textbook.

<http://www.openeducation.net/2008/10/18/21st-century-schools-pedagogy-must-give-way-to-andragogy/>

Evidence-based learning, based on the andragogical method, is actual student-centered learning and actual student-centered learning requires major adjustments in how we manage learning—it is not delivery of content, which never made sense anyhow, but is instead facilitating a process.

The Institutional Path for Change in This Age: Andragogy, not Pedagogy
From: <http://campustechnology.com/Articles/2008/10/The-Institutional-Path-for-Change-in-This-Age-Andragogy-not-Pedagogy.aspx?Page=3>
Retrieved August 19, 2011.



New Media Arts at Crockett High School



Purpose

The New Media Arts project addresses the need for quality transition to work opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities (ages 15-22) by providing a variety of training courses in new media arts and creating links to community media organizations and events. New Media Arts residencies are format flexible, offering individual and group training activities that are adapted to each student's abilities and interests, and are designed to enhance pre-vocational skills while providing a bridge to the media arts community and the world of media employment.

Definition

New media is the use of digital technology (i.e., photography, video, computers, etc.). New Media Arts combine new media with traditional arts (i.e., theater, dance, creative writing, art) in a fusion of new and traditional art forms.

Background

In 2011, VSA Texas and the New Media Arts project developed an eight-lesson curriculum to teach digital photography and beginning video production to young adults with disabilities transitioning to employment. The development of this curriculum spanned over one year (June 2010–July 2011) and involved six separate workshops, ranging from three to six hours per session and eight to twelve sessions per workshop, depending upon participant availability and workshop design. The resulting curriculum, *New Media Arts for Young Adults Universal Design for Learning Curriculum* summarizes the work of these young adults with a diverse range of disabilities in the exploration of traditional arts and new media technology. Because of their disability, many of the young adults served by this project experience significant challenges to placement in meaningful employment opportunities. However, through the New Media Arts Project young adults with disabilities, working with teaching artists, peer mentors, community volunteers

and college and university interns, created a useful guide to assist young adults with disabilities develop skills necessary to seek employment in the 21st century workplace.



Project Goal

The goal for this project phase was to revise, edit, and make available online the *New Media Arts for Young Adults Universal Design for Learning Curriculum*.

Project Objectives

- 1) To enhance the pre-vocational skills of teens and young adults with disabilities through engagement in new media arts and access to community events
- 2) To expand the abilities of high school teachers to provide coaching in new media arts for students with disabilities
- 3) To revise for online distribution the *New Media Arts for Young Adults Universal Design for Learning Curriculum* in a high school environment of students with disabilities

Project Guidepost for Success

The Office of Disability Employment Policy guidepost *Youth Development and Leadership* (<http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/youth.htm>) states that “youth development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them gain skills and competencies... In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need the following: mentoring activities designed to establish strong relationships with adults through formal and informal settings; peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities; exposure to role models in a variety of contexts... and opportunities that allow youth to exercise leadership and build self-esteem.”

The New Media Arts project provides multiple ways for young people to develop the skills and competencies necessary to navigate most social situations and the more formal communication networks of employment. Professional teaching artists and college age interns serve as mentors and role models in the media arts employment environment.

Typically developing students assisting with the project help their peers to create new connections within the general student social community. Field trips to community media organizations and interactions with media and arts employers offer opportunities to practice social and communication skills and to experience a professional working media arts studio.



Project Design & Implementation

The Crockett High School leadership team, comprised of an assistant principal, fine arts instructional coordinator, and three special educators, helped with outreach to typical students and students with disabilities, to determine the project schedule and participating Crockett instructors. They have expertise in Texas academic standards for curriculum revision and assist with off-campus field trips and events.

The project took place during two ten-week sessions: one focused on photography and one focused on video production. These sessions began January 9, 2012 and continued through the middle of May 2012.

Project personnel included a project director, a project outcomes assistant, an intern; four teaching artists qualified in photography or video production; and a web development specialist. Crockett High School fine arts specialists provided traditional arts instruction and assistance. Project activities included components from the New Media Arts curriculum with the objective of revising and editing lessons to prepare the curriculum for online dissemination.

Photography

Introduction to photography and digital cameras; learning basic photo composition and editing; still life photography; crop, color and contrast; storyline and slide show creation; introduction to social media and sharing photos/information. The photography class took a field trip to the Apple Store for a hands-on introduction to adaptive computer applications and to another location for an off-campus photo shoot.

Video Production

Introduction to movie genre and terminology; flip and other video cameras; lighting and sound equipment and



techniques; story development; storyboards and other pre-production techniques; producing an original video; editing and post production. The video class took a field trip to Channel Austin public access television to tour the station.

Curriculum Revision & Online Distribution

The project director and project assistant collected lesson planning documents from all teaching artists to assess revisions, additions, remarks and edits. The project assistant assisted with all classroom and field trip activities to collect evidence of student learning and document through photos/video for inclusion in the final online product. The VSATX web master will work with the project director to create a web-based portal on VSA Texas website for distribution of New Media Arts Universal Design for Learning curriculum. This web-based resource is available to the public at: www.vsatx.org/newMediaTransition.

Project Assessment & Evaluation

Assessment surveys for participants and parents/caregivers were developed during the pilot phase of the New Media Arts project. These surveys assessed pre and post knowledge and skills of new media arts as reported by the project participants and social and communication skills as observed and reported by parents/caregivers. These surveys were reviewed by the leadership team for their recommendations to assess the fine art specialist and special education teacher knowledge and skills. Teaching artists were required to provide lesson plans that detail activities including a universal design for learning checklist. At the close of each lesson, they provided additional information on the lesson plan form that identified successes and challenges, recommendations for revision, observations of student engagement and examples of learning, and any other anecdotal information that may help document the success or failure of the activity. Teaching artists and other instructors compiled a list of all online resources utilized in the planning of the activity. These resources will be incorporated into the extensive online resource list compiled during the pilot phase of the project and added as an appendix to the online curriculum.

Historical Background

In 2003, VSA Texas began its artist residency program in special education, general/inclusive, and pre-school classrooms for students with disabilities in Austin, San Antonio, El Paso, San Marcos, Benbrook/Fort Worth and South Texas/Rio Grande Valley. Since then, we have served over 7,000 students with and without disabilities through the Accessible Arts in Schools, Arts Alive and All Kids Can artist residencies. These residencies continue to bring meaningful arts education experiences to K-12 students with disabilities across Texas.

In 2004, the Artworks: Creative Industries program was launched with the first Statewide Careers in the Arts Forum hosted in Austin at the State Theatre. This forum was supported with funding from the Texas Commission on the Arts and City of Austin Cultural Arts Division. VSA Texas has produced four statewide forums since then, two in Austin, one in Denton (Dallas/Fort Worth) and a bilingual forum focused on family members, veterans and young adults in El Paso. These forums were supported by funding from the National Arts and Disability Center, National Endowment for the Arts, Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, Texas Commission on the Arts, Region 19 Education Service Center, Greater Denton Arts Council, Center for Visual Arts-Denton, and City of Austin Cultural Arts Division. Currently, there are close to 500 artists on the VSA Texas artist registry who participate in professional development activities.

In 2006, under the leadership of Chris Strickling, Expressive Arts Jam was launched in Austin as a summer camp to create opportunities in the visual and performing arts for teenagers with disabilities, some of whom had aged out of high school. The Jam met a need. There were very few arts programs, inclusive or otherwise, for young adults with disabilities to participate in a fun activity or a serious vocational opportunity. During the three-week summer camps, students explored visual art in the morning with expressive arts therapists and developed personal dramatic narratives in the afternoon. Working in partnership with



Channel Austin cable access television the students created a video *arts jam* for broadcast on cable access TV.

In 2008, Nilea Rohrer-Parvin, VSA International Artist Fellow, led the evolution of these camps into the Teen Apprenticeship in the Arts program. Nilea worked with students and teachers at the *We Are Learning* school, a home-school serving teenagers with diverse disabilities, to create autobiographical visual art and dramatic representations of their life experiences. Channel Austin again provided professional television studio staff and equipment to record the stories and to showcase them on the three cable access channels in the Austin viewing area.

In 2010, Carol Stensrud assumed leadership of the Teen Apprenticeship program. Under her leadership the program grew to focus on transition to employment and post-secondary education for young adults with disabilities. Working with the *We Are Learning* students, Carol developed activities that guided the students in designing, making, pricing and selling art at VSA Texas Access Gallery. Students not only created the artwork, they practiced their presentation skills and met with the Gallery Manager to show their work. At the Gallery opening, students were expected to talk about their process and their artwork during a brief artist talk. Revenues from their sales went to the class. The class used the proceeds to hold an end of semester celebration at a local coffee house.

In summer 2010, teen apprentices with intellectual and/or physical disabilities produced a theater showcase and a video production for distribution on Channel Austin. In the fall, the program moved to the Austin Independent School District's Go! Project a program for young adults aged eighteen to twenty-two. One *We Are Learning* student was employed as a peer mentor for the Go! Project students. With this move the interest of young adults in social media, movies and television became apparent. This transition marked the beginning of the New Media Arts program, a





blurring of the lines between traditional arts (i.e., visual, drama, dance, literary, etc.) and new media (i.e., computer based, digital photography, video, etc.).

In 2011, the New Media Arts curriculum was developed during two eight-week sessions with transitioning students in the Go! Project, and piloted with young adults (ages 16-22) with Autism Spectrum Disorder in two two-week summer new media arts camps. Interns from UT Austin Dept. of Theatre and Dance and School of Social Work provided curriculum development and evaluation support to these camps. Since 2006, one hundred fifty youth with disabilities have been supported through peer mentorships, master artist apprentices, role models in the arts and opportunities to exercise leadership and build self-esteem.

Collaborators with the New Media Arts project include University of Texas at Austin (UT) Department of Theater and Dance (interns and teaching artists); UT School of Social Work (interns); Austin Community College, Recreational Therapy Department (interns); UT Center for Disability Studies (interns, evaluation); Crockett High School faculty and staff (leadership team and co-instructors); Austin Independent School District (AISD) Fine Arts Dept.(supplies); MindPOP/ Any Given Child (consultation); Texas Commission on the Arts (funding); AISD Go! Project (project development); Knowbility (web resources); Blue Sky Abilities (interns).

A few significant outcomes: William successfully advocated for his return to independent living in New Orleans; Amory was admitted to community college photography and art classes in South Texas; Victor produced two digitally animated videos for competition; Elsa now goes to work willingly and without complaint; and Amy uses theater techniques to teach self-advocates how to testify before the Legislature.





Social Role Valorization

Social role valorization is “the application of empirical knowledge to the shaping of the current or potential social roles of a party (i.e., person, group, or class)—primarily by means of enhancement of the party’s competencies & image—so that these are, as much as possible, positively valued in the eyes of the perceivers.” (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 2005). New Media Arts vision aligns closely with the social role valorization (SRV) theory. SRV’s focus is to enhance the perceived value of the social roles of a person, a group, or an entire class of people and doing so is thus called social role valorization. There are two major broad strategies for pursuing this goal for (devalued) people: 1) enhancement of people’s social image in the eyes of others, and 2) enhancement of their competencies, in the widest sense of the term. Image and competency form a feedback loop that can be negative or positive.

http://www.srvip.org/overview_SRV_Osburn.pdf

Retrieved on August 22, 2011.

Universal Design ‘Thinking Ahead’ & Capturing the ‘Now’

Curriculum objectives were drafted with matching hands-on lessons. Each lesson was developed in-depth, planned on paper, visualized with the following questions: How is this activity going to be engaging for the students? How can we make this lesson hands-on? Is waiting to be expected? How can we liven up waiting time? How can choices and self-responsibility be built in? What about the student that does not see, hear, read, use of their hands, is nervous/anxious, or has significant learning challenges?



Evaluation Methods



1. Formative input from teachers and students; feedback was elicited regularly on specific learning activities such as themed photo shoot, film-editing lesson etc. True input expectations were made clear.
2. Regular pop quizzes and mid and end of term more formal quizzes.
3. Competency Based Projects–Ten projects were assigned over the course of seventeen weeks. Each project reflected a set of objective accomplishments.
4. Student Portfolios: Two portfolios for each student, including an e-portfolio and a 2D/3D portfolio, were developed to showcase both the digital project learning and artistic development.
5. End of term evaluation form filled out by students, staff, teachers, and family members.



Data & Comments

1. Formative Input from Students

Most of the students have significant verbal communication challenges. Evaluation was often non-verbal, a nod, a facial expression, a blink, or a teacher observation.

“Yay, editing was cool!”

“I had a dream about our showcase last night. I want to write a poem!”

“This has been the best class and... I learned *a lot!* (teary eyed) It is like we are a family!” (this student generally eats lunch alone)

2. Quiz Results

The students wanted the quizzes, once the format, a team game show (Family Feud style) was demonstrated. The

format of questioning was changed for each student based on their strongest modes of communication. Students, joined by teachers as equal players, were engaged, interested, participating with enthusiasm, and showing regard for others. All students benefited from the oral quiz, as this served as a content review. Students handled assessment of their competencies well, acknowledging right or wrong answers. Teachers confirmed that the quiz accurately measured the content that was taught and was understood by the majority of the students. This is very significant, as the student competencies in courses they have taken repeatedly, as reported by their teachers, is still very low. An early attempt at a paper and pencil quiz showed us that correlating a quiz answer box with an oral question was not successful for this cohort of students with significant learning challenges.



3. Competency Based Projects

The teaching artists worked with the high school administration to comply with all grading requirements, however, grades were not required. Proof of competency was required (pass/fail). We developed 10 course projects. Almost all students completed the 10 projects satisfactorily.

Ten projects were completed, two field trips, one end-of-year showcase and four quizzes. E-portfolio and 2D/3D portfolios provide evidence of growth.

Ten Projects

Section 1 Focus on Photography

- Many Faces of Me: Slide Show
- A Page in My Year Book Power Point (title, music, and transitions)
- Portrait Art (paper print of portrait with collage and paint)
- Art Bottle (decorated with photo collage and mixed media)
- Documenting your 2D and 3D art (photo and labeling)

Section 2 Focus on Digital Story Telling

- Music Video
- Silent Movie Video
- My Mini Movie: editing three video clips together
- E-portfolio and 2D/3D portfolio finalization
- Showcase planning and hosting



4. Portfolios

The e-portfolios were collected for the student showcase at the end of the semester, as well for teacher grading purposes (pass/fail).

5. End of Term Evaluation by Students

Five objectives were stated for the high school course. Students completed the evaluation form with the support of readers and scribes, as needed.

Objectives

- 1) Increase skills in New Media Arts
- 2) Increase pre-employment skills
- 3) Increase knowledge of community resources
- 4) Increase leadership skills
- 5) Increase confidence

Of all students surveyed, 99 percent reported YES to having increased competencies in four of the five objectives. A few responded NO to the increase pre-employment skills objective. We believe that these students may not have made the direct connection due to limited work experience.

Commentary: The results reported by these New Media Arts students are very strong. We suggest that our curriculum is developed with intentional and specific learning outcomes. The curriculum is hands-on, project-based with leadership and communication requirements built-in to socially motivate and support student success. Success is enhanced by the

attractiveness of the course content and format, integrating student preferences and learning styles. The students worked hard in this course because the content was engaging, current and interesting to them. The universally designed content aided in fostering success by every student.



Administration, Teacher & Family Feedback

“All she talks about is this class! She is so thrilled and excited, every day.” *Family*

“What you do is wonderful and we cannot thank you enough!”
Family

“He is so motivated! Up early and eager to get going every class day! This job has been so challenging and motivational for him.” *Parent of Peer Mentor*

“You guys have done wonders with my granddaughter, she just talks and talks about the class and activities.” *Grandparent*

“They have learned and benefited soooooo much and so have we.” *Teacher*

After seeing the New Media Arts showcase, the Principal invited students to select a photo from their e-portfolio for framing as a congratulations to the students.

The District Fine Arts Director recognized the value of the work and asked to share the silent movie with all special education teachers in the district.

“[they are] Tracking together towards an objective, rather than ‘alone.’” *Teacher*

“This is working miracles. I am so honored to be involved.”
Teacher

“I am learning so much about working with the students from this class.” *Teaching Assistant in Special Education*

**“This is working miracles.
I am so honored to be
involved.”**



Student Growth Documentation



Mini Case Studies

Joe, a tall young man who could pass for a 25-year old, is 18. He attended a vocational program in the morning and in the afternoon is often placed in the lowest level life skills classes. He is anxious, does not read well, writes just a bit, and can use a computer with a mouse if he has support. He has low tolerance for waiting his turn. His hand movements and balance are often uncontrollable. He has wonderfully creative ideas and with assistance, he can give directions to start tasks and move towards completion. He has a fabulous memory and communicates in very detailed ways. He has lived in a group home for many years and deals with the lack of independence, money, and family support like a typical student. He completed a two-hour PowerPoint tutorial with staff assistance, asking for larger icons because he cannot see well due to physical disability. His intolerance for failure was evident during this trial and error learning process, but he finished an eight-slide PowerPoint. Previously, in a New Media Arts pilot course, he completed a one-slide PowerPoint.

July is a very shy, quiet, bilingual student with challenging learning disabilities who tended to prefer solitary art activities. She typically did not participate in class discussions or in asking questions. She warmed-up and eventually began to offer responses during our circle time. She agreed to co-host towards the end of the semester with the lead teaching artist. July played parts in both the music video and the silent movie remake of the Titanic. She completed all but one (due to illness) of the required projects carefully and on time. She did eventually come to the front of the group for presentations when accompanied by a teaching artist or the student group. Her willingness to participate in the group increased significantly, while continuing to work on projects like painting video backdrops independently.

Jack is a tall and athletic young man who is shy, unsure, funny, and dependent on a friend or a teacher's aide for making decisions. He never answered a question and had to be prompted to repeat a given answer. By the end of the course, he was one of the leads in the film project and volunteered to co-host a circle up and check in with persistence and charm. He completed every assigned project on time.

Mark is a 19-year old student who is often mistaken for being ten years younger due to his demeanor, stature, limited verbal expression, and the nickname "baby" that family, students, and some staff refer to him by. His first visit to the class left him terrified. He stayed close to his regular teacher. His eyes wander; he repeats sayings and facial gestures. His main means of communication is body language, head nods, and some basic sign language. By mid-class, he was more confident, finding a seat, engaging with others with eye contact and a wave independently. He can speak most often in one-word replies, yet towards end of class he was offering short phrases and adding expression with his gestures. He completed a many task PowerPoint with support using the Apple Store tutorial. He communicated via yes/no and



pointing to order his own lunch, a first. He played a lead role in the video production, was very cooperative as he watched and picked up on the acting techniques. With time, his confidence, sense of humor and leadership skills began to come through. Others noticed changes in personality and he gained greater respect from others and for himself.



Pete is a 15-year old and is very small. He has been bullied so much that he chooses not to participate in any high school classes and usually talks one word whispers. At first he came to the class and stayed either outside in the hall or in the bathroom. Throughout the course, he gained confidence. He answered the quiz questions self-assuredly, contributed sentences in our circle up time, and played a complicated lead role in our silent movie. His teacher and parents are “over the moon” with his change in character. He is participating, motivated, and communicating verbally. Pete volunteered to join a summer New Media Arts course after the semester at his high school. This entails a whole new group of students, setting, and unknowns for him, evidencing his growth in self-confidence and motivation.





Lasting Benefits

Anecdotal evidence shows that past students taking the New Media Arts classes have gone on to:

- Community adult education classes
- Community college courses
- Work training opportunities
- Volunteering at radio stations
- Volunteering at performing arts centers
- Entering a film festival
- Attending a gallery networking meeting for photographers
- Considering studying media in college
- Peer mentoring with VSA Texas projects. This, for most, is their first paid job

Fifteen high school special education students participated in the New Media Arts course at Crockett High School. There were two teaching artists, one college-aged project intern, one lead special education teacher, two classroom teachers, and two classroom aides.

In addition, twenty-one young adults with disabilities participated in two two-week New Media Arts classes, focused on Community Media Resources and Music Recording, which were a direct result of the Crockett High School project.

References

Wolfensberger, W., & Thomas, S. (2005). *Introductory Social Role Valorization workshop training package*. Syracuse, NY: Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership and Change Agency (Syracuse University).

