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JFK Center

12.13.16

3 pm

Arts as Inclusion

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(The CART writer is standing by.)

>> THE OPERATOR: The webinar will begin shortly. Please remain on the line.

>> Hello everyone and welcome to the December installment of our VSA webinar series which comes to you from the JFK and relates to -- John F. Kennedy Center. If you would like to view live stream captioning of this webinar follow the link on the slide and in the chat panel on the right-hand side of your screen. The control panel can be hidden. If you need to leave the webinar early you can do so by clicking on the X in the upper right-hand corner. A recording will be available afterwards. You can connect the audio portion of the webinar

through your telephone or through your computer's microphone and speakers. If you are calling in from your telephone make sure you mute your computer speakers. You can submit comments, questions or answers to questions in the chat room. If you prefer to speak your input rather than typing it, click on the right-hand side of your control panel and I will touch base with you. At the end of the presentation there will be an opportunity to ask questions about the material. During this open-ended question and answer time click on the icon if you wish to speak or type your thoughts into the chat panel. Within a week we will send out a follow-up to today's presentation a copy of the PowerPoint slides and a copy of the transcript. You can go back to watch the recording and look at notes. Our January webinar will be led by members of the Kennedy center evaluation and research team. The registration link can be found in your chat panel. If you're active on social media, connect to us, on Facebook we are VSA international and on Twitter we are VSAIntl. Arts as Inclusion holding ourselves accountable and reaching students with disabilities. As we know efforts to provide opportunities for as many students as possible to learn along their peers is important. There are increased students with various settings. As art teachers we see these kids in our classroom and are tasked with addressing learning needs. It's an assumption and values of the arts classroom that make it a welcoming place for students with disabilities. This webinar I want to push us to bring that notion forward, challenging us to question those assumptions and hold ourselves accountable to the projects of inclusive instruction that our students with disabilities engage and make meaning alongside their peers. We're going to start by providing special education context. The individuals with disabilities act or IDEA was passed and we know it's a federal

law for quality access to education for students with disabilities. There are six tenants. The first is the individualized education program or the IEP. This is required for public schools to create for each student who is eligible for services under IDEA and it's the cornerstone of a student's education program. It's designed with an IEP team that has to include the parent, very often the students, a special education teacher a regular education teacher and someone who interprets education assessments. These folks are working together to make sure that the students' needs are met in classrooms.

The second is the issue notion of free and public education so IDEA guarantees that all students receive services with the public's expense. Third is developing alongside their Pierce and when we talk about inclusion we're talking about this section of the law. The fourth has to do with appropriate evaluation and this has to do with how a child is designated as eligible for special education services and it's an attempt to mediate a misdiagnosis and make sure that students are assessed fairly for whether or not they need special education services. The fifth celebrates the relationship between parents and teachers and ensuring a high quality education for a student with a disability and it makes sure that parents are viewed as valuable members of a child's education team. Finally IDEA puts in place safeguards that protects the rights of children and their families. This could include everything from access to educational records, understandable language of school materials and due process for if a parent has a dispute with the school.

As we are dealing with questions of including today the one that we're tuned into right now on this webinar is the notion of the least restrictive environment. I'm going to read from the law. To the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities including children in public or private

institutions or care facilities are educated with children who are nondisabled. Special classes separate schooling or other removal of child with disabilities from regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such with the children in regular classes with the uses of supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. This means inclusion is the goal. When I talk about that and especially when I think about working in concert with the other five tenants of the law this means more than just putting a kid in a classroom, right? That's where the onus is on us as educators to adapt our instruction and make sure that a child with a disability who is included in one of our classrooms accesses the same content as their peers in a meaningful way. Let's check in with where we are with the least restrictive environment. As of 2012, the most recent data we have nearly 95% of the students with disability are educated in regular schools and not a separate environment and most of those students are spending more than 80% of their school time in classes with their typically developing peers. Students who spend less than 40% of the school day alongside their peers is right about 14%, a little less. When I look at this data this is across disability categories so I want to encourage us to go one more level down. For our students that are hardest to serve that require the most support, students with multiple disabilities and autism is lower. This data doesn't tell us where exactly these students are spending their time. We can see they are in an art class, and in 1975 when this law was passed and had we started mainstreaming, putting kids with disabilities alongside their peers, art classes were the first settings. So let's unpack why. Why are the arts such a welcoming place for students?

I've pulled some common assumptions, things from my own

experience that either other teachers or administrators told me, things that were once assumptions in my own practice and we'll unpack these as we go.

Teaching art is easier than teaching math. We all know that grossly under sells the instruction that we as art educators can do but it's a common assumption. There is no wrong answer in art. Everyone can succeed. It's a fun subject! Expectations for students with disabilities can be clear. Students with disabilities have an opportunity to socialize with peers in the art classroom and finally the arts are inherently differentiated so everyone can access the curriculum. This is by no means an exhaustive list around arts instruction but what frustrates me about many of these misconceptions is it diminishes the rigor of the work that we do and we want to hold our student and ourselves accountable to lie expectations and accessing art curriculum. We want to ensure that students with disabilities can access content in a way that isn't just socializing with Pierce but meaningfully participating. We know that the research is on our side. We know that research supports the benefits of art instruction for students with disabilities so, again, this is far from an exhaustive list of the literature out there but we know drama activities and teaching strategies are linked to theories of mind and motion recognition things that are tied to learning readiness and things that are tied to an academic classroom. We know that art instruction has been tied to improvements in communication and social skills and in academics and that the visual arts specifically are linked to increase positive behaviors and academic skills like sequencing or understanding of concrete concepts or abstract concepts.

What I want us to think about and what kind F drives me in my own work is how do we maximize that? How do we maximize what we know about students with disabilities to challenge our

assumptions and substantiate those assumptions and by doing that how does that allow us to better reach and engage students? The framework that I would like to talk about today is differentiated instruction. When we talk about differentiated instruction we are talking about instruction that is proactively planned, an attempt to mitigate moments when you look up and realize that some of your students are not on the same page. It does this by accounting for student needs in the lesson design. It's a design choice that supports individualized instruction and is catering to a diverse student body. Good differentiated instruction is designed and responsive. It utilizes different styles and groupings and multiple modes of instruction. It informs teacher's understanding of student engagement and allows for adjustments. Allows you to walk between groupings and see how your kids are doing and have that inform the next choice you make. Finally it should be respectful. It almost goes without saying that high quality differentiated instruction relies on high-quality cribbing crumb. It it's based on the fact that all students can work within the curriculum when it supports their readiness and interests. So it's marketed by what is called a respectful pastor assignments that gives each student the optimal amount of challenge compared with the optimal amount of scaffolding. We break that down into differentiation through three avenues. Threw concept, process and product. When we talk about content we're talking about the "what" of our teaching. As you design your lesson you're asking yourself what knowledge or skills students are going to learn and that's the content, what you are committing that every student is going to understand.

To use an art lesson on community quilts and symbolism as an example, so I want my students ton understand the use of symbolism in art, I want them to look at anchor works such as

historic story quilts and we're going to create a quilt that's made up of panels that students are going to paint and shares an important story through symbols. I'm asking students to create and develop new work, new artistic ideas, relate those ideas of visual symbolism to the anchor content to these external ideas as well as with their own personal meaning and stories and I'm asking them to understand and evaluate that the arts can convey meaning through symbolism.

Naturally there are other things that my kids are going to learn in this lesson. I'm going to go through the history of story quilts, for example, but what I'm committing that every student is going to know and be able to do, I want them to understand symbols as a way of conveying meaning and I want them to relate that to their own lives as they create the panel.

Next we differentiate through process, the "how" of what we teach. You are asking yourself how you're going to communicate that core content to your students and specifically what activities are they going to take part in to build that understanding and mass industry. As we go back to the lesson I'm going to start by sharing what a shared symbol it. I'm going to have a large group conversation prompting examples, might provide an example of a dove as a symbol for peace. Together we will brainstorm other symbols that communicate messages of peace. I'm going to put that on the board so visual learners can see it and I'm going to encourage students to write down if that's helpful for their processing, then I might break kids into smaller groups. Assign a group to research a symbol's origin or identifying visual instances in either magazines or art books where we see the symbols that we've named as symbols for peace. Those kids are identifying other instances.

We move into introducing these anchor art works I want to show them to kids in as many ways as possible so show a video of

artists creating quilts and I would provide a graphic organizer so they can organize their own thoughts, project images on to screens and provide a printout or provide an opportunity to meet with artists or where we can go to a local museum and see and touch these art works. So providing multiple ways for student to access the content and multiple modalities for that content to be communicated.

So finally we differentiate our instruction through product. This is how the students communicate their understanding back to us. As you design this lesson you're thinking about how you're going to know you've gotten through to students, what projects could you design that would support a student showing you they've developed the skills and the knowledge that you planned for. As I said earlier, my final project for this is a community quilt. I want each student to have designed and painted a panel that they can contribute to the project. But remember my core content. I want every student to understand symbols as a way to convey meaning and I want them to relate that to their own lives. So when I think of different ways to demonstrate understanding I can and should consider different media. If the content isn't learning to paint if the content is learning the symbolism, then I can have students who are going through magazines and who are picking out symbols, who are cutting and making collages, if I had a student whose interest is in needle work I can support that as their product because, again, they're all having the opportunity to show me they understand the core content. The important thing is that the product is tied to the learning goal that you've identified. We know that we differentiate instruction for students in the room but there are three specific things that we break that down to when we are talking about differentiated instruction. We differentiate through process and product, we differentiate for

interest, readiness and the learner's profile.

So interest, right, we know that different students have different interests, different preferences and passions. When we differentiate our instructions we consider how we can capitalize on these, how we can view passions as strengths and how we can view these as avenues through instructional materials. We differentiate for readiness, right, students bring diverse experiences into the classroom and all of that informs the prior knowledge that they draw upon when they access new material so lessons that build on previous material it can be as simple as knowing which student understood key vocabulary or found additions for a new lesson. It can be concrete or abstract.

Finally we differentiate for our students' learning profile so every student accesses content differently, we have visual learners, auditory learners, students who need active discussion to process. I include in this social and cognitive disabilities as a consideration so how does the neurological development of a student influence his ability to engage with my instruction and what things do I need to change to help that student access the content that I'm delivering. When we return to the definition -- sorry, when we get this information about our students from a number of categories, we know that we get them from IEPs and from collaboration with our other teachers. We want to make sure in the best case scenario that art educators are included in the IEP meetings, right? We have a responsibility to advocate for necessary supports that follow the students into the classroom. We know it's a best case scenario, it's not something that always happens and so what we rely on is informative assessments, this is what Carol Tomlinson calls an on going exchange and I think of this as a driver in your classroom, right? So it's great when an IEP can give you

information about learning profiles, it's great when a special education teacher or resource room teacher can share with you things that a student needs to succeed but differentiation thrives on as much information as you can get. Think about what you know about interest or readiness or learning profiles and as you go through the lesson you find more out, you're doing a formative assessment, learning about students interest and that's affecting the decision that you make about content, process or product. You make that choice and see how students engage and respond. That's more formative assessment and that leads them to another choice about differentiation. So, for example, my knowledge of a student's autism could inform the classroom that I design, how I set the lights, what volume I speak in, how much we're doing in group work, what we're touching. But my assessment then and how that student demonstrates is how that student is understanding and the challenges in the environment that I set up. It's giving me information about his learning profile, about his interest or readiness, and informing the next choice I make about my teaching. So if we return to the definition of differentiated instruction it's marked by flexibility, responsiveness and respect. We happen that good differentiated instruction meets students where they are, we are making choices with students in mind and we know that good differentiated instruction provides multiple entry points for core content, it recognizes students access material through processes that are multi mode and gives students a way to communicate their understanding and finally at every opportunity we can we're making opportunities for interaction and engagement both because we know that's what high-quality instruction looks like and it can provide us good feedback.

So I like to think of the supports in differentiated

instruction as having three tears, that triangle might make sense to folks with an intervention sort of model. We start with instruction, planning and implementing with differentiation in mind. In many classrooms that's enough, right, making choices about multiple ways of presenting content, multiple ways of students responding back to you. That provides opportunity for every student to interact and make meaning. When necessary we adapt our activities. This is an opportunity to meet the particular needs of a student. We do it within the activity as it was initially designed. This could be providing a student a grip on a paint brush, something that allows them to participate in the activity but is adapted to a specific need they have. And finally and this applies to the fewest number of students in a classroom. We modify the activity, change the activity itself so we have met the need of the student.

When we do this, though, even though it's our last resort we do it with the core content in mind still saying that we want to make sure that whatever activity we end up changing to, it's still designed to meet the learning goal that we have identified for all our students. So if we look at that in the arts context it will take us back to that symbolism lesson, the community lesson accounted for student variance through proactive design, presenting those core anchor art forms and the content about symbolism in ways that were multi modal, that responded to students needs. We can adapt the activity to support students in the project. I had envisioned it as being a painting activity with each painting their panel.

Some of my students might need an adaptive grip, some might need finger paints or students who have fine motor skills could use finger paints and that allows the student to participate as it was designed in the project but adapted to a specific need that they have.

Finally when I have students who need the activity actually to be modified, right, who aren't going to be creating a painting, let's say it's because they're struggling with creating new ideas on their own, with generating that content but I still want them to be thinking about symbolism and ways to tell their story, I can provide them a selection of symbols to choose from, I can provide them with magazines and posters and allow them to collage their panel and they're still participating in that context.

The next question I think about as a profession are we ready and the recent research indicates that the majority of arts educators don't feel prepared to teach students with disabilities. I'm looking at a 2015 survey, only 21.8% felt that the university course work when they were studying to be educators prepared them to teach students with disabilities, 26% felt prepared to promote enriching experiences in their classroom and that's compared to 95% when asked about students with disabilities. Right? So we know there are professional development opportunities out there, I will plug Intersections on this webinar series and we know there are people doing incredible work. So think about how we distill this message to educators and think about four take-aways from differentiated instruction. The first is to design for variation. Think about the core content, the most important learning goal that you have. Think of multiple ways you can communicate it for students and for them to communicate it back to you.

Formative assessment is key. Build in frequent opportunities for it and allow what you find out about your students in those moments to influence the decisions that you make in the classroom, be flexible with the lesson you have and work within your learning goals to make sure that every student is accessing meaning.

The notion of respectful tasks, provides students with a level of challenge that's optimal and respectful of their abilities and strengths and interests. I think it is important to provide scaffolding that supports students but that provides exercises that are meaningful from wherever they are coming from. Finally be an advocate. This early sight for inclusion gives you an advantage point. When you think about student success in your classroom think about the structures that you put in place and see if other teachers can be put into place.

I wanted to keep the webinar with minimally me talking and allow for questions and answers. I'm going to pass this over to me go began to moderate Q and A. Again, in our question and answer session you can type your questions into the chat panel or you can raise your hand and at the appropriate time Megan will unmute you. Let's go ahead and get started.

>> MEGAN: Hi, everyone, this is Megan, I will help Jenna with the questions.

This is our first question, is differentiation the same thing as UDL or UDL a component of differentiation?

>> JENNA: Great question. They are technically two different things in the sense that they come from UDL really came out of universal design work from architecture and with adapted and creative educational framework. So they are different in the sense of who created them and they are different frame works but you're picking up on a lot of the same language and the same principles, the idea of thinking of multiple ways to endanger students and present content and multiple ways to have students communicate content back to you, a lot of that is language of UDL but it absolutely plays into the differentiated instruction framework so it's a strategy that you can use when you think about differentiating your process and it's also a strategy that you can use when you think about

differentiating product or how students communicate understanding back to you.

>> MEGAN: Sorry! I was muted. Could you please speak more on how an opportunity is a respectful task especially for students who are nonverbal?

>> JENNA: Great question. The first question that I ask myself when thinking about respectful tasks is if it aligns to the content. The first and most important way that I think we respect student's autonomy and skills is by holding them to the same content standard that we hold all the other students in the classroom. So if I have students who are generating symbols and thinking of -- who are creating new work and then I have a student who is doing a coloring activity where I've drawn the symbol, that student isn't accessing the same content. So even a student who is nonverbal if we can support pointing at images or colors, choosing materials that help that student to express the story that they want to share, we're giving them that autonomy and they're participating in the content. So the first question that I ask is it aligned to the content that is being taught to all students? Then I think about what skills the student is bringing, how does the student typically communicate meaning or take part in activities? Is it as simple -- so the question is what supports does the student need to access the content? Is it as simple as providing a grip? Programming other pictures or options into their communication board? I try to build in those supports. It's a fine line and kind of a dance between those two things but I think if we're aligning to the content and we're providing support so that they can participate that's where I start.

>> MEGAN: The next question is can you speak to the role of arts learning as differentiated instruction in other subject areas?

>> JENNA: I could do a whole other webinar on that! For me the first step and this was the purpose of this webinar is how we aim the framework of differentiated instruction to arts learning and I think that you're hitting on the second step, right, which is how do we apply what we know about arts learning to the settings where differentiated instruction is already taking place? I think what we do -- and this is totally my opinion and my work and what kinda gets me out of bed in the morning but I think about the parts of art that align with differentiated instruction, right? So we know that arts learning is multi modal, we know that there are ways to participate in the creation of a painting that allows for you to touch and to talk and to listen and to think and to create and all of these different ways and to collaborate with your peers. So when I think about how we can enliven inclusive settings and how we can make those arts-based settings, I think about the projects, right, so the symbolism aligns with ELA content goals. I do a version of that lesson where I talk about it as an arts integrative lesson where there are goals related to the creation of the community and also where there are goals related to the identification of symbols and literature or of generating symbols as a tool to communicate meaning in text you can use it for music as well. In that lesson we're using the arts activity kind of as a tool through which we're differentiating instruction so we're thinking about ways that every student can participate in the creation of that product and through the creation of that product they're making connections and understanding ELA content.

>> MEGAN: Regarding the statistics you have shared about teachers' perceived readiness to work successfully with students with disabilities what work do you think needs to be done to increase inclusive training at the college/teacher prep level?

>> JENNA: I think that's critical! I think it's probably the most important place that we could devote attention relative to increasing skills. I would plug two incredible programs that are in our network. The Boston conserve to her at Berkeley and the Moore college of art and design both of which offer two masters programs in the country that are for arts and music educators that focus on serving special populations.

I think it should be in which the same way that it is now standard practice that a general education teacher has to take at least one course in special education and in their preservice instruction program. I think it's possibly even more critical for arts educators, because we know, right historically that's the place where kids are starting their inclusion. So I think to throw an art teacher into that setting relying on intuition and perceived or assumed benefits of their subject area to do that without structured guidance about how to best reach an engaged students is doing the students a big disservice. I would start there and I have looked to the shining examples in the field who are doing this work in educating preservice teachers. I think it's property that teachers have continued opportunity for professional development in this area throughout their career and this is where I would be remiss not to plug the webinar series or the resources that VSA puts out, the great work that our affiliates and contractors do and the opportunities presented by our conferences to come together and share best practices. Because I think that the research shows us that when teachers don't have supports they feel burnt out and leave the profession. I think the more opportunity we can provide teachers to learn these skills and to better support their students, teachers practices improve and teachers are more satisfied in the work that they do and the most important thing is our students are better served.

>> MEGAN: One of the reasons why children have successfully been included in art instruction is the forty years of advocacy and support and inclusion provided by VSA and its students.

>> JENNA: Great point, the people who are in this community are absolutes the driving force between making sure that legislation was passed that this work continues and that we can, I think, for us it's the sort of next step now to make sure that whatever assumptions people are about the arts classroom, whatever assumptions people have or misconceptions people have about the rigor of the work that's done in the arts that we push on that as a community and make sure that, yes, every kid has a right to be in this classroom, every kid has a right to participate in the arts to enjoy the arts and learn in the arts and define meaning and a place to express themselves. The arts matter because of their rigor as well, right? The arts -- they're important in their own right and so making sure that it's not just every kid gets to be at the table or in the room but every kid really has access to the same high quality art and arts instruction.

>> MEGAN: Can you speak on formative assessments, what are the most effective that you have seen in the art room?

>> JENNA: This sounds silly but to me the most effective formative assessment is walking around and observing your students and talking to them. It sounds silly and not formal, I'm sure I have colleagues in research and evaluation who are somewhere aware that I'm sharing that as an assessment strategy and they're like where is the data, where isn't it written down? But honestly I think one of the reasons flexible grouping is such an important part of differentiated instruction that's shaking up how kids are grouped, who they're working with, what they're working on is because it gives you that flexibility as an educator to walk around the room to look at a child who is

painting their symbol and say to them, why did you choose that color? Why are you choosing to do your lines in that soft or dotted way? What does it mean when it's heavier stroke or brush? I think all of these opportunities to see how your students respond with different peers with different content, what their interests are, that all becomes this arsenal of material that you use to inform the decisions that you make in the classroom. I go back, there is an incredible statistic, I can't remember who did it but the number of decisions that a teacher makes in a minute is second only to something like air traffic controllers, right? We're constantly wired to change the strategies that we use to reach our kids. So to me, yes, we rely on formative assessment to check an understanding of vocab, the quick thumbs up, thumbs down, did you understand what the assignment was and did you understand the -- the which I can check for understanding and comprehension but you get the most information by watching your kids and giving them opportunities to share with you what they're thinking and why.

>> MEGAN: What resources do you use to find ideas of differentiation or assistive technology?

>> JENNA: Also a great question. I think Carol Tomlinson's work is incredible and I would encourage you to research her but you can type her name into Google and you will get a thousand resources that she has published. There are excellent rubrics for differentiation that she and folks she has worked with or taught have used. They vary in -- I've seen some that I love, that I wanted to use in the classroom and immediately saw some I played and tweaked. But I think there are great checklists that she provides that are about what differentiation looks like. If you have another teacher that you work with, if you have an opportunity to videotape yourself, observe through the eyes of a student what you are doing or reflecting on a lesson that you

did, really talk through did I provide opportunities for flexible grouping? Did I provide students an opportunity to share with me what interested them about the lesson, did I provide multiple ways of presenting this information? I think those resources are really, really helpful because they allow you when you have an arts activity that you feel good about or an arts did he gray active activity that you like, it allows you to challenge the assumption that it is differentiated in its own right because that's art and it holds you accountable to am I doing these things that I know are supported best practices for reaching a student with a disability.

>> MEGAN: Looks like that question wraps up our questions.

>> JENNA: Wonderful. Well, thank you all so much for the great questions and insights and for allowing me the opportunity to pull some double duty today. That does conclude today's webinar. I would like to ask you as our webinar participants to remain on the webinar and complete an evaluation survey. Your feedback is always appreciated. Thank you for joining us. For questions or comments if you have additional questions about resources that are around my email is on the screen, or you can reach me by phone at 202-416-8861. Have a great day.

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