Using Fine Arts to Implement Inclusive Education: Inspiring the School through a Schoolwide Art Project

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USING FINE ARTS TO IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:
INSPIRING THE SCHOOL THROUGH A SCHOOLWIDE ART PROJECT

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Professional Paper

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Abstract

This paper chronicles the development and completion of a schoolwide living mural project created through the cooperation of every student in an elementary school in Northwest Montana as a way to facilitate inclusive education. The project was fashioned to allow students who are educated in a self-contained classroom the chance to interact with their peers through a schoolwide art project. This involved creating two murals to experience the benefits of the arts; to educate the student body on how to interact with students with disabilities; to demonstrate to general educators how to facilitate the inclusion of all students; and to give the student body the opportunity to work together among a diverse population while engaging in the arts. The backdrop for the murals is the historical adaptation of Glacial Lake Missoula. The lessons implemented connect the history of the area with fine arts integration through the support of the school and community. Elements of visual art, music, movement, and creative dance have been incorporated into the lessons associated with this project, giving all students a chance to enjoy, participate in, and benefit from inclusive education and the arts. Finally, this project incorporated collaboration with all grade level teachers in the school, with the Parent Teacher Organization, and with other administrators, staff, and faculty members, supporting successful inclusive practices. The inspiration for this project, as well as much of the research and fine arts practices used, came from a master’s program offered at the University of Montana, called the Creative Pulse, where teachers are taught to enhance their instruction by integrating fine arts into the curriculum, increasing creativity, and using meaningful interdisciplinary practices for their students.
INTRODUCTION

My name is Desiree Valentino. I am a wife, an artist, a student, and a teacher. I am a special education teacher at an elementary school in Northwest Montana. However, prior to my current position I had the privilege of being a high school art teacher on an Indian reservation for several years. While there, I worked with many students at the high school who were receiving support from the special education department. I enjoyed the opportunity to work with students with disabilities, and utilized art as a platform to help my students improve their Individualized Education Program goals, increase self-confidence, and build social skills. I found the unique challenges of working with students with disabilities gratifying, which inspired me to pursue a position in the special education field. Art has numerous benefits for all students, however it is within the focus of special education where I have seen the most potential for improving a student’s quality of life. Since becoming a special education teacher, I have integrated art into the curriculum as a vehicle to give my students with significant needs new school experiences, to develop additional skills, and to promote inclusive opportunities for all students.

My art-centered approach to learning is based off of my teaching experience, as well as my own continued pursuit of learning within the educational spheres of art and special education. I have a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, with a focus on teaching low incidence disabilities; teaching endorsements in special education and art education; a Bachelor’s of Art in Art Education; and will complete my Master of Arts in Fine Art the summer of 2016. I was part of a grant program toward my M.Ed., called TTEAM (Training Teachers to Ensure Achievement and Membership for Children and Youth with Low Incidence Disabilities), that taught me how to facilitate inclusion for students with even the most significant disabilities, and my M.A. program, the Creative Pulse, has drastically enhanced my fine arts integration and
creativity in my teaching. I am passionate about both art and special education, and utilize my experience and education from both fields to enhance my students’ overall learning experience at school.

Due to the excellent instruction I received at the University of Montana, in concert with my natural synthesis of art and special education, I have been inspired to facilitate a schoolwide living mural project at my elementary school. The goal is to promote the inclusion, participation, socialization, and acceptance of students with disabilities through the arts.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive Education and its Importance

Inclusion, also referred to as inclusive practices, is explained by Marilyn Friend and William D. Bursuck (2012) as the “belief or philosophy that students with disabilities should be fully integrated into their school learning communities, usually in general education classrooms, and that their instruction should be based on their abilities, not their disabilities” (p. 6). Inclusive education is implemented by having all students learn in the general education setting, regardless of differences or disabilities. In other words, it is the theory that “all children learn best in an inclusive setting” (Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 29). According to David Rostetter, “The more significant a student’s disability, the more imperative the need to be included with typical peers” (as quoted in Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 29). This means that all students, no matter their needs, behaviors, or abilities, are in the same classroom as their typically developing peers. This includes students with autism, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments, and any other condition.

Howard Gardner (1990) wrote, “Children who spend a significant number of years in school are better able than ‘unschooled’ peers to handle issues and questions when these are encountered in an unfamiliar setting or when they have been divorced from their usual context” (p. 4)—the same can be said for inclusive education. There are tremendous benefits to inclusion, and both research and federal law support inclusion for students with disabilities. According to Rapp and Arndt (2012), “Research tells us that inclusive practices are effective for all students” (p. 29). Furthermore, Friend and Bursuck (2012) elaborate by stating, “academic outcomes in inclusive schools have been found to be positive for students…For example, in a statewide study, researchers found that students with disabilities who spent more time in general education passed
the eighth-grade assessment at a higher rate than similar students with disabilities who were educated in special education settings” (p. 16). Additionally, “U.S. federal law requires placement in a general education classroom with appropriate supplemental aids and services to be the first placement consideration” (Kaufmann, 2006, p. 5). This was due to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which “paved the way for inclusive schooling by requiring that students with disabilities be educated alongside students without disabilities to the maximum extent possible” (p. 5). Inclusive education allows students with disabilities to benefit from the same education as their nondisabled peers, have access to grade-level curriculum, experience the fun and exciting activities and routines in the classroom, and have exposure to appropriate interactions and behaviors in school. According to Reitz et al. (2014):

Researchers have long noted an association between the social environment and the behaviours, feelings, and thoughts of individuals…Their dynamic interplay has been considered to play a key role in personality maturation, because identities are not construed by individuals alone but negotiated in social interaction processes between individuals… peers account for a substantial share of variance in lifespan personality development. (p. 279, 282)

Students with disabilities deserve the same kind of peer interaction as students without disabilities. As is the case for all people, “Peers are a pervasive aspect of people’s lives” (p. 279), and even students with disabilities should have a chance to develop friendships with their peers. When students with disabilities are self-contained, rather than included, they do not get the same exposure to peer interactions, and do not get to enjoy school in the same way. Instead, they are excluded, and usually not learning valuable lessons on prosocial behavior because they lack the experience due to being surrounded by other students with disabilities who do not know how
to socialize appropriately. Additionally, when students with disabilities are kept separate, they receive instruction from modified curriculum that is usually below their grade level, and they tend to be surrounded by adults. Imagine what school life would be like as a child in a self-contained setting, surrounded by mainly adults instead of grade-level peers, never getting the chance to socialize, make friends, or partake in all of the wonderful experiences school has to offer.

Inclusive education does not just benefit students with disabilities, but also benefits nondisabled students and teachers. Rapp and Arndt (2012) explain by stating, “Providing support in inclusive settings leads to improved learning for students—and more success for teachers” (p. 31). Inclusion benefits the rest of the student body by giving all students “access to multiple learning styles and assistance as needed” (Friend & Bursuck, 2012, p. 17), as well as preparing typically developing students with the skills needed to work with, understand, and accept peers with differences. It creates a diversity-enriched environment that promotes working through, understanding, and accepting each other’s differences, making teachers better prepared to teach to various levels and needs, and making typically developing students more knowledgeable about working with and interacting with people with disabilities. Inclusive education can be a positive experience for an entire school.

Inclusive opportunities may look different for each student with a disability, depending on their unique abilities and needs. Special education is education that is individualized for each student, meaning the education of each student with special needs will be unique to that particular student. Each student with a disability has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which consists of “instructional services and other assistance for a student with disabilities” that “must be tailored to meet his needs” and “is reviewed and updated annually”
(Friend & Bursuck, 2012, p. 12). This provides and delineates adjustments to the standard course of study for each student, which has been decided by a team of professionals (including the students’ parents, case manager, general education teacher, administrator, and specialists), and is specific to the needs of that student. Individualizing education is applied to inclusive practices. Sometimes students with disabilities who are included in the general education setting need a quiet place to work because they become overwhelmed by the different sensory input received from the general education classroom. If students need to be removed temporarily from their general education classroom, but are still part of their class, know all of their peers and teachers, have access to the general education curriculum, and decide when they need a break from the environment or task, then according to Rapp and Arndt (2012), they are still considered general education students first. Friend and Bursuck (2012) explain, “inclusiveness is not judged solely on the location of a student’s education…instruction sometimes must occur in a separate setting. However, their goal is to return the student to instruction with peers as soon as possible and for as much time as possible” (p. 16). Although, if the student spends most of their time in another classroom, only makes occasional visits to the general education setting, and is removed from the classroom due to behaviors that differ from the other students, then that is not inclusion. Judging “the effectiveness of inclusive practices on a student-by-student basis, monitoring progress and making instructional decisions according to the student’s individual needs and educational program” (p. 16) is the most effective way to ensure inclusion is matching a student’s needs. This is why supports and services will look different for each student.

One of the most important factors in making inclusive education work for all students is if teachers of general education classrooms support and accept students with diverse needs into their classrooms. It not only helps students with disabilities, but also helps the teachers.
Additionally, “inclusive attitudes are the best way to best teach all children” and this belief “guides us in supporting students and teachers” (Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 31). Believing that “all children can learn” will “[shape] all of our decisions” (p. 31). Teachers should “enter the profession grounded in the belief that all children can learn and that the teacher’s role is to support the success of all students” (p. xxiii). As stated before, inclusive education can be a positive experience for all involved, but there are some challenges in its implementation.

**Current Status of the Problem**

Many teachers and administrators are unfamiliar with inclusive practices and do not understand their benefits or implementation; there are even some who are intimidated by the concept of inclusion. This creates a barrier to inclusive education, mainly because the support of general education teachers is needed in order to successfully implement its practice. Some teachers have “less willingness” (Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 31) to accept students with disabilities in their classrooms because of any number of reasons – intimidated by the student’s disability (“How do I teach that student?”), disbelief in the student’s ability to learn (“I don’t see how he can be in here when he won’t gain anything anyway – he can’t even add.”), fear that the student will be a disruption (“She’s too loud; my other students won’t be able to learn if she’s in the class.”), or are afraid of taking risks and trying something new (“I’ve never had a student like this in my class, I don’t know if I’m the right teacher for her.”). They, unfortunately, have the assumption “that children with disabilities would not benefit as much from learning in a general education setting as in a separate, special education setting” (Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 29), believing that these students should be in segregated classrooms. This assumption cannot be any further from the truth. Sometimes it is a matter of changing one’s perspective. For example, Rapp and Arndt (2012) argue:
Rather than see this [disability] as a difference that warrants attention, patience, and creative problem solving…teachers and administrators unfortunately sometimes see this student as an outlier, a detriment to the flow, and a problem. Students with learning differences or learning challenges can be seen as wrenches in the works, rather than as diverse people who provide opportunities for teachers to embrace as learning experiences for themselves. (p. 99)

Additionally, Cole, Waldron, and Majd explain there are others who feel that having students with disabilities included in the general education setting “may result in the more able students experiencing boredom,” and may cause students with disabilities to experience “frustration when trying to keep up with instructional pace” (as cited in Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 29). Some also exclude students with disabilities because they feel the students “are not ready” (p. 34). These viewpoints can be looked at as elements of “the readiness model” (p. 34), described by Rapp and Arndt (2012) as putting “the burden of preparation for learning on the child” (p. 34). Many of these challenging beliefs against including students with disabilities come from historical viewpoints. As stated by Rapp and Arndt (2012), “Historically, we have excluded students with disabilities from general education classrooms,” without understanding that “all children learn” (p. 34). Students with disabilities may have different learning rates, different ways of demonstrating what and how they learn, and may require different supports in order to learn, but that does not mean they do not and cannot learn, as was believed in the past. Keeping students with disabilities excluded from the general education setting is what led to what Buterbaugh et al. (2014) describes as “the invisibility of disability” (p. 72), where the students with disabilities are seen coming to school on their special bus, and then never again seen within the confines of the school building.
History can explain where many of the negative and segregating viewpoints regarding inclusion, and perspectives about students with disabilities, have originated from. As explained by such authors as Kaufmann (2006), Rapp and Arndt (2012), and Lipsky and Gartner (1997), policies and laws today are completely different from what they were during the early and even mid-twentieth century. Prior to the 1970s, young children with disabilities were removed from their homes, their families, their schools, and their communities, and placed in institutions, special schools, and residential centers, completely segregated and isolated from society. As Kaufmann (2006) wrote, “At that time people with disabilities were considered incapable of learning and were viewed as an embarrassment and a burden to society;” and along with the inability to attend public school, they were not even allowed “to participate in the arts, recreation, and leisure activities” (p. 5). According to Lipsky and Gartner (1997), prior to the 1980s, known as the “Era of institutions” (p. 81), society viewed people with disabilities as patients; people who needed to be controlled and cured, and who belonged in institutions, needing to be separated from the rest of society. There were even “ugly laws” during this era, where people with physical abnormalities could be arrested if they were seen out in public, due to their perceived “unsightly” appearance (Schweik, 2009, p. 1). The 1970s through the 1980s became known as the “Era of deinstitutionalization” (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997, p. 81). This era viewed people with disabilities more like clients, still segregating them from the mainstream population, but through different programs and activities—such as group homes, workshops, special schools, and special classrooms—in an attempt to modify their behavior. No longer were people with disabilities looked at as needing to be cured; instead skill development and behavior management were the priorities in helping to shape and change their behaviors. Finally, from the 1990s to current day, referred to as the “Era of community membership” (p. 81), the viewpoint is
transforming from “patient” and “client”, to that of “citizen” (p. 81). People with disabilities are beginning to be looked at as citizens, where aid is given so that they can achieve independence, or live as independently as possible, through supports, individualized transition plans for their futures, funding toward independent living (such as support for houses, live-in aides, and technology), and a focus on teaching them how to be self-determined, functioning adults in today’s society. Instead of focusing on curing them, changing their behaviors, and trying to control their lives, the focus is now on changing the environment to make the world more accessible to them (such as providing job coaches so that they can pursue a career; creating buildings with ramps that enable everyone access, instead of stairs). Knowing the history of the paradigm shift makes it even more understandable as to why “Special education evolved as a separate system because educators, legislators, and administrators believed that children with disabilities are so different from their peers that they must need specially trained teachers” and segregated environments (Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 30).

Fortunately, the older viewpoints and negative biases against including people with disabilities are starting to change, being replaced with a more positive outlook. The paradigm is shifting in the way society views people with disabilities—in large part due to the civil rights movement, inclusive education, and supported employment (Friend & Bursuck, 2012)—which has a huge effect on the education, as well as overall acceptance, of people with disabilities, as it has in the past. Even though there are some teachers and administrators who are still skeptical about including students with disabilities, as stated previously, there has been evidence that inclusion helps everyone involved. As discussed by Buterbaugh et al. (2014), many of the techniques, interventions, adaptations, and modifications make the school experience better for all. For example, when teachers allow the entire class to use the same notetaking options as their
peers with disabilities it “[encourages] more participation in group discussions as [students are] not spending all of their energy copying notes” (p. 94). Another example is having “the grades of all other students” (p. 95) increase as peer groups are encouraged, formed, and utilized in the class to assist and support everyone. As Buterbaugh et al. (2014) stated, “The teacher’s role is not to give the students the wings to fly but to make them realize they had those wings all along” (p. 36)—this concept should be applied when teaching students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are capable, they can learn, they do learn, and they deserve to be supported, to be accepted, and to benefit from high expectations from their teachers, just like everyone else.

**Implementing Inclusive Practices**

**Creating an Inclusive Atmosphere**

Creating an inclusive atmosphere starts with the teacher. Teachers are the facilitators of the classroom; they set the tone, establish the norms and rules, and influence their students’ perceptions. Teachers who accept students with challenging needs with open arms promote the inclusion of all students in their classroom. They teach their class that acceptance is not an option; it is a requirement—all students enrolled in that classroom make up that class—and they guide their students on how to work and socialize through differences and diversity.

There are many teachers who are interested in working with students with disabilities, who want them in their classroom, and who want to teach all students how to interact with each other, but they do not know how. As written by Buterbaugh et al. (2014), “what inclusive education should look like” versus what it actually is, can be a challenge; and “Having a vision of what inclusion should look like is only half the battle. The other half is knowing how to achieve that vision” (p. 5). In order to successfully implement inclusive education in the classroom, teachers need to be educated on how to teach diverse students. This includes learning
about best practices on teaching socialization, and what to expect in the classroom when students have varying abilities. Things such as not treating a student with a disability as if they are younger than their peers, and encouraging classmates to ask students who are struggling if they need help before assuming they need it (essentially creating learned helplessness) are aspects of working with students with varying abilities to which teachers may not know or be accustomed. Additionally, helping teachers to see past students’ disabilities and to understand that “Students with disabilities and other special needs are children and youth first” (Friend & Bursuck, 2012, p. 401), that they deserve the same education experience as every other child and youth, is also an important component for promoting schoolwide inclusive practices. Furthermore, understanding how the brain works, what triggers problematic behaviors, what motivates students, how to engage them, how to teach appropriate behaviors, and how to adjust instruction so that they can gain the most benefit, are all important factors that help contribute to creating an inclusive atmosphere. According to Buterbaugh et al. (2014), “This includes differentiating instruction, utilizing UDL [universal design for learning], and taking students IEPs into account,” as well as “making instructions appropriate for all of the students” (p. 92). Buterbaugh et al. (2014) explain that this can be a challenging process, but “it can also be rewarding for the students and the teachers involved” (p. 92).

Understanding the Brain

Successfully supporting diverse students in the general education classroom requires understanding how the brain works. This means possessing a fundamental grasp of how students think, how they learn, what motivates them, what instructional pace is best for them, what triggers problematic behaviors, how to help them utilize self-calming and regulating strategies,
and teaching them how to maintain a calm and healthy mental state. This applies to all students, as stated by Rapp and Arndt (2012):

The neurological development of children and adolescents is complex, and it is integrally related to student performance in school. There is so much more to school than academics or book learning. Success in school depends on mastery of skills in other areas as well, such as social skills, behavior, physical skills, memory, and organization. (p. 94)

Because school incorporates other skill areas, not just academics, it is imperative that students with disabilities share the experience of school in the general education setting with their peers—they should not have to miss out on all of the learning and skill development that is taught in the general education setting, as they have as much a right to be in the classroom as everyone else. They also have a right to benefit from evidence-based practices that help all students succeed and self-regulate in the general education setting.

Understanding what triggers problematic behaviors, and sensing when students are getting upset and entering the fight-or-flight response, described by Daniel Goleman (2011) as an “amygdala hijack,” are important steps in improving classroom management so that problems may be avoided proactively (p. 30). The amygdala is explained by Goleman (2011) as “the brain’s radar for threat” (p. 30). When there is an amygdala hijack, the amygdala takes over the prefrontal cortex of the brain, “[capturing] our attention, beaming it on the threat at hand” (p. 30). There are some students, of all ages and abilities, who experience this hijack in school, which can be described as a meltdown. This meltdown, or hijack, “can last for seconds or minutes or hours or days or weeks” (p. 32). This type of behavior is not uncommon in the general education setting with typically developing students. Many teachers are familiar with
having to work through meltdowns in their classrooms, but not all teachers understand why the meltdowns are taking place or what causes them, making it difficult to teach students when they are in this frame of mind. According to Goleman (2011), while in this state, “the alarm circuits trigger the fight-flight-or-freeze response that pumps stress hormones into the body with a range of negative results” (p. 36). This type of mental and emotional condition can cause what Richard Davidson refers to as “behavioral inhibitor[s],” such as “low motivation,” causing students to be “generally more anxious and fearful and have increased vigilance for threats” (as cited in Goleman, 2011, p. 40). When students are experiencing this, Goleman (2011) stresses that their cognitive abilities are greatly impaired, meaning their “capacity to learn is very vulnerable to stress” (p. 49). Dr. Norman Doidge (2015) also describes the effects of an amygdala highjack on learning by stating “Many…with brain problems, or learning problems, are often in a state of sympathetic fight-or-flight, feeling desperate, endangered, and hyper-anxious because they can’t keep up with unfolding events” (p. 111). Doidge (2015) further explains that the person in this state “can’t heal or learn well,” making “brain change harder” (p. 111). Therefore, if students are unable to perform effectively while in this state, then teaching them how to learn new skills should not be the focus while they are experiencing a hijack. Instead, focus should be on assisting them with calming down and regulating their emotions. Goleman (2011) explains:

If you are a kid who’s preoccupied by worry, anger, distress, anxiety, or whatever stress causes in you, you’re going to have a diminished capacity to pay attention to what the teacher is telling you. But if you can manage those emotional upsets, your working memory – that is, the capacity of attention to take in information – increases. (p. 73)

Goleman (2011) suggests using biological interventions to help students calm down and self-regulate, such as practicing relaxation techniques and meditation, as well as experiencing what
Barbara Fredrickson recommends as “at least three positive emotional events for every negative one” (p. 36). These suggestions would benefit unregulated students by giving them more positive experiences than negative ones, which would uplift spirits, prevent behavioral issues and emotional distress, and improve overall quality of life, through the creation of new neural pathways in the brain, ultimately helping to form good habits and beginning to eliminate bad ones.

Additionally, knowing how to prevent an amygdala hijack from occurring, by understanding what triggers students’ challenging behaviors, and removing those triggers from the environment, as well as understanding what keeps students calm, relaxed, and engaged, are methods that can be used to maintain healthy mental states for students. Preventing triggers from happening will eliminate challenging behaviors before they start, and creating an environment that makes all students feel welcomed, relaxed, and supported will increase productivity and healthy emotional states. Doidge (2015) refers to the opposite of an amygdala hijack as the “parasympathetic system,” also called the “rest-digest-repair system” (p. 111). Doidge (2015) explains that this state “triggers a number of chemical reactions that promote growth, conserve energy, and increase sleep, all of which are necessary for healing” and “recharges the mitochondria, the power sources inside the cells… reenergizing them” (p. 111). When in this state, students can socially engage better, permitting them “to connect to other human beings” (p. 112), and allowing others to help them “soothe,” “support,” and “regulate” their nervous system (p. 112). This is when students are able to be attentive and learn best.

Finally, there are times when students are regulated, but will engage in behaviors that are inappropriate for the classroom environment, causing disruptions. Examples of these behaviors include taking personal items from a teacher’s desk without asking, calling out when needing to
use the restroom, getting upset when there is a change in schedule, or grabbing at others when seeking attention. Without proper techniques being utilized to help students adjust inappropriate behaviors, attempting to extinguish those behaviors in the classroom can cause students to experience frustration, and could trigger additional challenging behaviors. This does not mean that students demonstrating inappropriate behaviors should simply be removed from the general education setting; instead it means that they need to be taught appropriate replacement behaviors that will serve the same function for them as the inappropriate behaviors. This means helping students develop new cell growth and neural connections through repetition, which will enable them to unlearn maladaptive behaviors by replacing them with adaptive behaviors. Doidge (2015) explains this by stating, “when a person learns something new, different groups of neurons get wired together…one can…undo brain connections that are not helpful, because neurons that fire apart wire apart” (p. 8). Goleman (2011) describes this as “neurogenesis” (p. 68). Neurogenesis is the growth and development of neural circuitry (Goleman, 2011). Habits are formed by the neural wiring that has already been created in the brain, however habits can be changed, due to neuroplasticity. Doidge (2015) describes neuroplasticity as “the property of the brain that enables it to change its own structure and functioning in response to activity and mental experience” (p. xv); and Goleman (2011) connects neurogenesis to neuroplasticity by explaining, “Neurogenesis adds power to our understanding of neuroplasticity, that the brain continually reshapes itself according to the experiences we have.” (p. 68). According to Goleman (2011), in order to make a new habit permanent, one must use neuroplasticity and do a task “over and over again” (p. 70) for it to become automatic. He elaborated further by stating, “When you start to form the new, better habit you are essentially creating new circuitry that competes with your old habit in a kind of neural Darwinism” (p. 70). Teaching students how to
turn inappropriate behaviors into appropriate ones can be done successfully when incorporating positive behavior supports, which will allow them to form good habits, and will support healthy growth and development in the classroom.

**Positive Behavior Supports**

After understanding how the brain works, supporting student learning and success can then be done by implementing positive behavior supports. This means reinforcing and teaching students appropriate behaviors, rather than punishing them for negative behaviors. Reinforcing positive behaviors through a systematic approach helps to teach students with disabilities important life lessons and social skills that will enable them to flourish in all aspects of their lives. Utilizing these types of supports helps make inclusive education successful and creates a positive learning experience for all students involved. Janney and Snell (2008) wrote, “As more is learned about programs and strategies that improve schoolwide discipline, it has become evident that both individual students with behavior problems and the student body as a whole benefit most from proactive, positive, instructionally based approaches” (p. xiii).

Positive behavior supports (PBS), also referred to as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), according to Friend and Bursuck (2012), “are research-based, systemic approaches designed to enhance the learning environment and improve outcomes for students” (p. 371). They focus on preventing challenging behaviors, and proactively removing triggers that may cause meltdowns, or amygdala hijacks, while also promoting independence. These interventions and supports work through a tier system—those tiers being primary, secondary, and tertiary—which are based on preventing problematic outcomes. Janney and Snell (2008) explain the different tiers by stating, “the goal of *primary prevention* is to prevent new cases of problem behavior, the goal of *secondary prevention* is to ameliorate current cases of problem behavior,
and the goal of *tertiary prevention* is to reduce the intensity and complexity of current cases of problem behavior” (p. xiv).

Each PBS tier is used for a different percentage of the student population, based off of their needs. For instance, 80% to 90% of the student population is said to benefit from the primary prevention tier. As explained by Janney and Snell (2008), “primary prevention uses *universal interventions* that are part of a broad, schoolwide system of well-defined, consistent discipline policies, effective academic instruction, and social skill development” (p. xiv). Most students have their needs met at this level. Examples would be schoolwide rules that are clear and well-defined, a schoolwide discipline system that is consistent, expectations written and displayed that positively define appropriate school behaviors, and multiple ways of acknowledging and rewarding expected behaviors.

The secondary prevention tier is used for 5% to 15% of the student body. Janney and Snell (2008) describe this tier as being for students “who exhibit risk behaviors such as poor school performance, affiliation with violent peer groups, and poor social skills” (p. xiv). These interventions consist of “selected interventions” (p. xiv), such as adult mentors, self-management techniques, careful scheduling, and other environmental supports. Selected interventions are usually administered to a small group of students who have similar challenging behaviors.

Finally, approximately 1% to 7% of the student body require tertiary prevention support. These measures are used “to reduce the harm inflicted and experienced by the 1% to 7% of students who display chronic, severe problem behavior” (Janney & Snell, 2008, p. xiv). This tier uses “specialized interventions,” which are “more individualized and intensive” (p. xiv). A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is used for specialized interventions, which is a thorough process to determine the trigger of a challenging behavior, the consequence of that
behavior, and its function. The FBA then determines how to best modify the behavior so that the student can receive the same function the challenging behavior served, except in an appropriate way—for example, receiving attention by raising one’s hand instead of calling out, or using headphones to decrease noise levels instead of screaming.

Positive behavior supports have been “confirmed as effective by sound research and practice…are advocated based on values and philosophies” (Janney & Snell, 2008, p. xiii), and “[help] support students with behavior problems in a systematic, holistic way rather than by using a trial-and-error or fragmented approach” (p. 2). Additionally, positive behavior supports “are based on a philosophy that places the development of positive relationships and successful participation in daily life at the heart of any effort to help people with difficult behaviors,” their use “has been incorporated into the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004,” and they promote “the use of collaborative teaming and problem-solving processes” (p. 2). They are “most effective when classroom educators, administrators, school staff, and parents work collaboratively and in concert” (p. xiii); and according to Janney and Snell (2008), utilizing positive behavior supports is “an effective approach” for people with disabilities so that they can be properly supported, and ultimately “live and go to school in typical, inclusive settings” (p. 2).

**Differentiating Instruction and Universal Design for Learning**

Utilizing knowledge of the brain and how it works, as well as positive behavior supports, have proven to benefit all students, and support inclusive practices in the general education setting. However, adjusting what is taught and how it is taught to the class so that students can be engaged in their learning and able to participate in classroom activities will further support the progress and success of students with disabilities in the general education setting. As emphasized by Friend and Bursuck (2012), “when effective practices are in place, many learning
problems can be prevented” (p. 132). Differentiating instruction can be used as a way to accommodate various learning styles in the classroom.

Differentiation is described by Rick Wormeli as, “doing whatever it takes to maximize students’ learning instead of relying on a one-size-fits-all, whole class method of instruction” (as cited in Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 30). This means adjusting what is taught to fit each student’s needs. According to Friend and Bursuck (2012), differentiated instruction is “a variety of teaching and learning strategies…necessary to meet the range of needs evident in any given classroom” (p. 132). Because classrooms are made up of students with diverse needs and abilities, differentiating the content that is taught to the class, the way it is taught, and how students can “demonstrate what they have learned and their level of knowledge through varied products” (p. 132), differentiating instruction makes the most sense to meet the needs of all students. Friend and Bursuck (2012) explain, it “is achieved by providing materials and tasks at varied levels of difficulty and with varying levels of instructional support, through the use of multiple grouping arrangements, student choice, and varied evaluation strategies” (p. 132). This supports inclusive education by creating an environment where teachers are adjusting their lessons and the materials used for the benefit of all students, enabling them to learn and succeed due to individualized education, and allowing for all students in the classroom to prosper. A more effective way to differentiate instruction, however, is not through adapting and modifying instruction, but through creating curriculum that already has the adaptations and modifications built into it. This method is called universal design for learning (UDL).

Rapp and Arndt (2012) explain that “Universal design for learning is a set of principles to follow when developing curriculum, so that the curriculum meets the needs of every student, giving all students equal opportunity to learn” (p. 144). It is “a process by which a curriculum is
purposefully and intentionally designed right from the start to address diverse needs” (p. 145), and is described by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 as being flexible “in the ways information is presented, in the ways students…demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged” (as cited in Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 144); it also “provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students” (p. 144). This concept came about “from the field of architecture, where it was learned that designing buildings for persons with diverse needs from the beginning makes them more accessible and saves money spent on costly retrofits of ramps and automatic doors” (Friend & Bursuck, 2012, p. 131). The concept was then applied to education, with the idea “that instructional materials, methods, and assessments designed with built-in supports are more likely to be compatible with learners with special needs than those without such supports” (p. 132). The theory is that if curriculum is originally designed to include all ability levels, then less accommodations and modifications need to be implemented because the curriculum is already all-inclusive. Friend and Bursuck (2012) listed “print alternatives such as graphics, video, and digital text,” which “allow students with reading problems to more readily access subject content” (p. 132) as an example. Another example would be the “use of templates with partially filled-in sections and links to more information,” which could “help students construct a better essay” (p. 132).

Universal design for learning has “three primary principles” (Rapp & Arndt, 2012, p. 145); those being: “1) to provide multiple means of representation, 2) to provide multiple means of action and expression, and 3) to provide multiple means of engagement” (p. 145). When designing curriculum, offering it through multiple means of representation has many benefits. Those include, as described by Rapp and Arndt (2012), increased access to learning for all
students, reinforcing newly learned content in numerous ways, and empowering students to become “expert learners because they will be familiar with multiple ways to receive information;” meaning they “will know what works best for them and can explore a range of ways to learn new information” (p. 146). Allowing students to demonstrate and express what they have learned in multiple ways gives students more choices, and supports their strengths. For example, giving all students the option of doing an oral report for a research project through the presentation of pictures, an art project, or through dance, rather than speaking, would include any nonverbal students in the activity, and would offer a fun and creative alternative to standing before the class and talking. Rapp and Arndt (2012) suggest using options for physical expression, communication, and executive functions when creating multiple means of representation. Finally, using multiple means for engagement is a way “to engage students in learning” where “Everyone becomes engaged by different types of tasks and different learning situations” (p. 151). For example, having the option to work individually rather than cooperatively, and offering both open-ended tasks and objective tasks so students who prefer one over the other still get the benefit of using their preferred method. Rapp and Arndt (2012) suggest offering the following options for engagement: options for catching interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and self-regulation.

Universal design for learning is a great tool to use in the classroom to help motivate students with disabilities to learn and participate by offering options, basing instruction on their preferences and strengths, and helping them succeed through multiple means of engagement. It supports inclusive education, creative expression, and enhances learning for all. Its implementation can lessen the demands for curriculum adaptation and modification, and it can provide multiple means of learning for an entire class. As explained by Rapp and Arndt (2012),
UDL “empowers educators to create classrooms where all students are full citizens. It also empowers them to advocate for students so their needs are met in all settings” (p. 145). Having more teachers understand how to utilize this practice can assist with not only the inclusion of students with disabilities, but also the education and experience of every student.

**The Benefits and Inclusivity of the Arts**

According to Howard Gardner (1990), “it should prove possible to devise curricula that are developmentally appropriate and that also address the significant differences found among individuals” (p. xiii). The key to promoting inclusive education within a school is to use methods that are nonintrusive for general education teachers that also demonstrate how to facilitate inclusive practices. The arts provide the perfect platform for demonstrating how inclusive practices can be facilitated, due to their being engaging, promoting of cooperative learning, and their inclusivity. The arts have numerous benefits, and strengthen the learning, growth, and development of all students, as well as promote creative expression, problem solving, critical thinking skills, and communication. On communication, Gardner (1994) wrote, “Because the arts provide a natural means for men to act and to communicate, they can reveal vital and elusive information about the experiences and subjective life of others” (p. 349).

Additionally, there is no right or wrong way to participate in the arts, and because of this, everyone is equally able to contribute to the production of the arts. For example, when integrated in the curriculum, dance and movement allow students to use their minds and bodies, and enable them to creatively communicate their thoughts, ideas, and contributions to a lesson; the visual arts help to engage students’ problem-solving and critical thinking skills, aid in fine motor development, and, along with dance, can help promote prosocial behaviors when working cooperatively; and music is a way to help students maintain a calm and relaxed state, become
engrossed and focused on the task at hand, and create an enjoyable atmosphere. The arts enable all students to participate in and contribute to a lesson, promote creative skills and abilities, and allow teachers to see how every student can contribute to an activity.

Furthermore, the arts support learning in numerous ways. Gardner (1994) described how the arts provide “pure pleasure” (p. 21) for children through their “therapeutic qualities” (p. 346). The aesthetic development from the arts increases “the ability to solve problems that emerge in the exercise of skilled behavior” (p. 270), causing children to be “in a situation fairly representative of the scientific process and of scholarship” (p. 174). Additionally, “most creative [activities]” lead to “inspiration and discipline” (p. 278). Gardner (1994) describes artistic development as involving “the education of the making, perceiving, and feeling systems; the individual becomes able to participate in the artistic process, to manipulate, comprehend, and relate to the symbolic media in specifiable ways” (p. 283). Gardner (1994) has recommended that teachers can use the arts to “devise situations that will draw productively upon the child’s various systems” (p. 293). Each art form shares similarities in its benefits, but also provides different aesthetic and therapeutic qualities.

**Dance, Movement, and Performance**

“Of all the uses of the body, none has reached greater heights, or has been more variably deployed by cultures, than the dance” (Gardner, 2011, p. 235). Dance “can reflect and validate social organization,” it can be a “recreational activity” or “a psychological outlet and release” (p. 235). Furthermore, dance is “a statement of aesthetic values or an aesthetic value in itself” (p. 235). “Dance can serve an educational purpose” (p. 235). Although dance can be “a pleasurable activity to do alone,” it is “even more so when shared with others” (Kaufmann, 2006, p. 29). Dance in a school or classroom setting can “create opportunities for meaningful social
interactions,” can “result in a profound sense of belonging,” and “can connect us with one another and promote a deepened sense of community” (p. 29). Kaufmann (2006) explains how collaborating through dance “helps children develop an appreciation for diversity. The social benefits of dance are particularly relevant for individuals with disabilities, who often experience social isolation and loneliness. Dance increases their opportunities for socialization” (p. 30). As an additional note on dance, regarding how it relates to communication and how it could support students struggling with communication disorders, the benefits can be summed up by one famous quote from Isadora Duncan: “If I could say it, I wouldn’t have to dance it” (Gardner, 1990, p. 21).

Dance, movement, and performance involve a whole-body approach to learning. When integrating dance, movement, or performance to academics, students are using their minds, bodies, and spirits to learn, grow, and have fun. Creating exciting learning experiences at school makes lasting memories, deeply ingrains the knowledge learned into students’ minds, and teaches to the whole student—not just to the mind, or just to the physical body. Our minds, bodies, and spirits are all connected; dance, movement, and physical performance help unify the three areas that make up who we are, and keep us healthy, balanced, and in a clear state of mind. Doidge (2015) explained that “the brain is always linked to the body and through the senses, to the world outside” (p. xx); and “the body is as much an avenue into the brain as is the mind” (p. 31). Additionally, “Freud emphasized how the mind and the body always influence each other” (p. 167). The two are inseparable, and “attempts to understand one without the other are futile” (p. 92).
Music

Plato demonstrates the positive influence music has on those it surrounds, by a quote from his book, *The Republic*, which states, “…rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten” (as cited in Doidge, 2015, p. 280). There are “rewarding and reinforcing aspects of listening to music” (p. 348). Gardner (2011) explains that “All…subjects appreciate something of the structure of music” (p. 114), and that “Music can serve as a way of capturing feelings, knowledge about feelings, or knowledge about the forms of feeling, communicating them from the performer or the creator to the attentive listener” (p. 131). Music is enjoyable, soulful, and therapeutic. It literally “can lift spirits” by “[turning] on the reward centers of the brain, which increases the production of dopamine, which in turn increases feelings of pleasure and motivation” (Doidge, 2015, p. 348). Brain scans have found “that when the brain is stimulated by music, its neurons begin to fire in perfect synchrony with it, entraining with the music it hears” (p. 345); making music “a way to change the rhythms of the brain” (p. 345). This means that it actually “resynchronizes the brain by entrainment and gets neurons firing together, so that the brain is much more efficient” (p. 348), becoming “clearly a means for improving people’s moods” (p. 348).

The benefits to education are numerous, especially since music is a way to increase positive feelings, efficiency, and overall enjoyment in the classroom. However, music also has therapeutic qualities associated with improving the lives of children and people with disabilities. According to Doidge (2015):

Because so many brain disorders are caused when the brain loses its rhythm and fires in an offbeat or “dysrhythmic” way, music therapy is especially promising for these
conditions. The rhythms of music medicine can provide a noninvasive way to get the brain back “on beat.” (p. 347).

Additionally, “Therapeutic Listening…has helped…children [with disorders] improve their energy, level of arousal, language processing, memory, attention, and auditory sensitivities” (p. 349).

Different types of music used may have more or less benefits in their therapeutic qualities than other types of music. For example, some professionals prefer using Mozart for music therapy, “especially [his] compositions with violins, because it is the instrument richest in higher frequencies and can produce continuous sounds that are easy on the ear” (Doidge, 2015, p. 350); and because his music is made up of “more youthful compositions, which are simpler in structure and more appropriate for children” (p. 350). Mozart’s music has been found to “[work] with everybody, and had the effect of both charging, stimulating, and relaxing and calming” (p. 350), making it regulating for its listener. Furthermore, Mozart is “universal,” in that “It doesn’t have the strong imprint of a specific language, the way” (p. 351) others do, due to the fact that “Mozart himself started playing music extremely young” and “had wired the language of music into his brain so early that it was not much influenced by the rhythms of his own language” (p. 351).

**Visual Art**

Producing visual art can “elicit higher level thinking skills” (Holdren, 2012, p. 693), as well as cultivate “problem-solving skills and thinking stamina” (p. 693). According to Gardner (1990), “various curricular efforts argued that artistic education exerted positive effects on other areas of learning, ranging from other art forms, to history and science, to the ‘basic skills’ of reading, writing, or arithmetic” (p. 36). Holdren (2012) states that the act of creating art enables
students to “use the same cognitive skills that [they] use when they read” by causing them “to control and use symbols,” which “prepares [them] for using the visual symbols associated with reading, specifically elements such as letters and numbers” (p. 693). Creating art causes students to “become more engaged, to understand texts more deeply, and to develop ‘higher level abstract and critical thinking’” (p. 693). Holdren (2012) also states that art influences “students to notice and manipulate detail” (p. 693); to engage in “metaphoric connections” (p. 696), “manipulation of detail” (p. 697), and problem solving” (p. 697) techniques; and to “[enjoy] higher levels of engagement” (p. 700). Participating in visual art projects “can offer an alternative that accommodates a variety of working styles and engages students in critical thinking skills” (p. 692). Furthermore, art is a resourceful medium that allows “students with very different working styles” an opportunity to “fit their preference and…to adapt the creation process” (p. 700); meaning “students with a variety of working styles…adapt well to creating art” (p. 702). Holdren (2012) explains that there are “clear benefits of collaboration, problem solving, synthesis and evaluation of detail” as well as “increased emotional engagement and differentiation of working styles” when engaging in art projects, which make learning “both rigorous and enjoyable for students” (p. 703). Because of art’s benefits, “powerful learning can occur” (p. 703) for all students.

**Promoting Inclusive Education through the Arts**

Gardner (1990) stated, “Individuals do not develop merely by existing, or growing older, or becoming larger; they must undergo certain pivotal experiences that result in periodic reorganizations of their knowledge and their understanding” (p. 3). This includes students with disabilities. Rather than lecturing teachers on why inclusive practices are necessary for all students, creating a schoolwide project that incorporates the arts is a more effective way of
demonstrating how to facilitate inclusive education, as well as allowing students to benefit from
the rich learning experience gained when participating in activities involving the arts. The arts
are fun, engaging, educational, and naturally inclusive. According to Gardner (1990):

…when [students] are themselves engaged in rich and engaging projects, which call upon
a variety of modes of representation; when they have the opportunity to interact and
communicate with individuals who evidence complementary forms of learning—these
are the situations that facilitate a proper alignment among the various forms of
knowledge. (p. 31-32)

Not only do the arts promote inclusive education, when they are used in a group setting
they also give students firsthand experience working with a diverse population, promote
cooperation with others, and demonstrate everyone’s contributions. Using a schoolwide art
project to facilitate inclusive education is an effective way to demonstrate how inclusion is
implemented, and to encourage its practice without educators feeling compelled to have to adopt
a new teaching strategy they do not yet feel comfortable initiating. This type of project allows
everyone involved to have a fun learning experience, while also promoting social interaction,
inclusive practices, and instructional equality in a nonthreatening environment.
METHOD AND DESCRIPTION

The Project

I am a special education teacher and thoroughly enjoy working with students who have disabilities. I get the opportunity to see my students grow and progress every day, and get a chance to celebrate daily milestones as they overcome obstacles, learn independence, and blossom into self-determined individuals. I receive the benefit of getting to know my students for who they are, rather than what they have. However, outside of the special education world, few get to see my students for who they really are. I wanted to change this. I wanted to give my students every opportunity to have an exciting and fulfilling educational experience, in the general education setting, with their peers and school. I believe that students with disabilities learn best when they are interacting with their non-disabled peers, and that students without disabilities learn valuable life lessons working collaboratively with their peers with disabilities.

It is from my special education training, through project TTEAM (Training Teachers to Ensure Achievement and Membership for Children and Youth with Low Incidence Disabilities), where I have learned about the benefits of inclusive education, and how to adapt the curriculum and environment to be all-inclusive.

It is through the Creative Pulse where I learned how to take risks to facilitate creative learning experiences for others, how to integrate the arts into the curriculum, and how to take on ambitious tasks and turn them into fulfilling experiences for everyone involved. I wanted to do something memorable in my school that would demonstrate to the student body, along with the faculty and staff, who my students were and how they can be included. I also wanted to generate friendship-making opportunities for my students, and create an all-accepting and inclusive school
environment. The Creative Pulse inspired me to accomplish this task through a schoolwide art project.

The Planning and Implementation

From the Creative Pulse, I learned that our limitations are only as restrictive as we make them. These limitations are usually created by our internal fears, but working past those fears can create opportunities that we never would have dreamed possible. I also learned that collaboration is the key to turning big ideas into realities, as well as forming bonds and lasting memories. To create large scale projects takes some work, but with time, planning, organization, and a lot of creativity it is possible to turn even the most grand idea into reality. Prior to the Creative Pulse, I had many ideas that I wanted to try with my students, however, with those ideas came many reservations, mainly due to a fear of what would happen when a creative risk was taken, as well as a fear of public speaking. I already had a love for art and an understanding of the benefits of art in education, since I was an art teacher before joining the Creative Pulse. However, I did not fully understand the benefits of what some of the other arts could contribute to education, specifically movement, dance, and performance. It is through the Creative Pulse that I finally understood the value of movement, dance, and performance, and where I also learned how to integrate them into the curriculum. Never before would I have imagined that I would be able to combine history and movement together for a fun, inspiring, and all-inclusive lesson. During my last summer of the Creative Pulse, I knew that for my final creative project I wanted to do something big, something that would incorporate the entire school, promote inclusive education, and allow for collaboration with my colleagues. I just had to figure out what I wanted to do for a project that would incorporate all of these ideas.
At my job, I am not the only extended resource classroom (ERC) special education teacher. I have the privilege of working with another special education teacher who shares my beliefs in inclusive education. He went through the same special education program that I went through, and values and appreciates the benefits of the arts. After working together and discussing future plans and challenges faced by our students, we came up with a project idea that could incorporate the entire school. My colleague had heard about Lexan panels, and thought they would be a great medium to use for the project, as well as to use to cover up a popular, yet potentially dangerous, climbing area that students could access, without having to block out the light that everyone enjoys from the upstairs windows. After discussing it further, and brainstorming how the panels would allow us to do something fun, as well as prevent inappropriate climbing, I proposed that this be the project for my Creative Pulse assignment. I wanted to create an all-inclusive schoolwide mural project that would incorporate two murals, one on each side of the building where the windows were located. This project would allow me to promote inclusive education, encourage collaboration, and integrate the arts. My colleague liked the idea, and I took on the role of facilitator for the implementation and creation of this project, while also collaborating with my colleague and other faculty and staff members in the school.

The theme we decided on for our murals was that of Glacial Lake Missoula. My colleague has a background in social studies and I have a background in art, and so Glacial Lake Missoula was the perfect way to combine our two talents: we would have the students create two historic scenes for the murals based off of what they learned from our history lesson. I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to incorporate dance, movement, performance,
music, and art into a history lesson, and I was excited to begin teaching the arts integration techniques and ideas I had learned about from the Creative Pulse.

After deciding on the theme and subject matter for the mural and lessons associated with this project, I created a proposal. Taking on a schoolwide art project would require the approval and support from administration. In the proposal, I stated our purpose, what we wanted to accomplish, how we were going to accomplish it, and an estimate on how much it would cost. My proposal can be found in Appendix C. After submitting my proposal, and having a meeting with my principal and colleague, my principal was intensely interested in this project. He approved it without hesitation, and offered his support. After obtaining administrative support to move forward with this idea, the next step was determining where the funds would come from. My principal suggested contacting our school’s Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).

I was in contact with our school’s PTO, where I explained the purpose of our mural project, and sent them a copy of our full proposal. They put my colleague and me on the agenda for their next meeting and asked that we present our proposal. At the meeting, we went over our plan, why we wanted to do the project, the academic skills we wanted to teach, the scope of the project, how we were going to implement the project, our background information, our anticipated results, and what we needed. The communication of our project ideas were aided by the PowerPoint presentation I created for this meeting. Within two weeks of our presentation, the PTO approved funding for $500, with my colleague and me contributing our PTO funds as well (equaling $400), in order to pay for the Lexan panels, which would cost approximately $900 in total. We then had to figure out where we would get painting supplies.

Before figuring out where and how we were going to get painting supplies, I wanted to test out different painting techniques and materials on the Lexan panels. I went to Michaels craft
store and bought a variety of paints, as well as two small Lexan panels to experiment on. I decided that the best style to paint in, which would allow for the protection of the paint on the murals, while also preventing inappropriate climbing on the windows, would be the reverse glass painting style. This style has the artist paint on the back, with the front showing the painting from behind, meaning the paint is not exposed to chipping, scratching, or peeling because it is located on the back of the panels and not accessible to students. This style is also very forgiving, and would allow for mistakes to be made without damaging the look of the mural. Additionally, I found that acrylic paint worked best, with the added benefit of creating a stained-glass effect when displayed by the window.

Next, I spoke to my principal and asked him where and how we could obtain painting supplies for our mural. He suggested the Fine Arts Department, and offered to get in touch with them about the supplies. The fine arts supervisor agreed to lend us paints, and after finding out what colors and type of paint I wanted to use, he had them delivered to us immediately. He also requested that we turn this project into a living mural, one which would enable us to repaint the surface in the future. This would also allow us to continue promoting inclusive education, collaboration, and arts integration for our school in future years. I was grateful for his contributions, and idea, as well as honored by the request for us to do this again in the future. As for paintbrushes, we had several thin brushes in the ERC for the finer details, and I ended up purchasing larger brushes from Michaels. I now needed to teach the students in the self-contained classroom how to paint, and to get them accustomed to trying new materials and activities involving the arts.

In an effort to prepare the students in the extended resource classroom for the changes in routine that would take place for this mural project, earlier this year I began teaching an art
lesson every Friday. Initially, there were challenges to working with different mediums, with a different teacher, and in a different style. I utilized what I learned about the brain and neurogenesis from my research, positive behavior supports, and universal design for learning to help me be a better art teacher for the students in the ERC, and to help them enjoy the experience I was creating for them. Utilizing practices from my research, I was able to not only get full participation from the students in the ERC and lessen problematic behaviors, I was also able to motivate my students to paint independently for extended periods of time. During these lessons, they would sit at desks learning how to use paint, and would experiment with new mediums, activities, and styles. Throughout this process, my students enjoyed the lessons, and were able to join their grade level peers for the schoolwide instructional sessions related to this project.

Initially, the plan for the schoolwide instructional sessions was to create three different lessons related to this project, which would be taught to every grade level class: the first lesson being an ability awareness lesson, the second being a history lesson on Glacial Lake Missoula, and the third being an art lesson. However, with time constraints, unplanned interruptions to schedules, and the very unpredictable environment of being a public school teacher, I decided to focus on two lessons to teach to each grade level class: those being an ability awareness lesson, and an art and history lesson combined. My ERC colleague and I thought it would be a great idea to involve the school counselor in our ability awareness lesson, so we contacted her, and planned a lesson that would be taught by us during her sessions. I created the ability awareness lesson and then shared it with my special education and school counseling colleagues to get their opinions. After some constructive feedback to the ability awareness lesson, we then adjusted our schedules so that we could teach the lesson together. We taught the ability awareness lesson during each class’s counseling session to kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. The lesson
can be found in Appendix D. Grades three through five did not have a counseling session as a special class, so I decided to wait to teach their lessons, and first focus on the other half of the school.

I then created the history lesson about Glacial Lake Missoula, and incorporated many of the activities and concepts I learned from the Creative Pulse: movement, dance, performance, art integration, collaboration, creative expression, and making learning fun. For example, I used Brain Gym and Brain Dance as a warm up, I used many strategies and techniques I experienced and read about from Karen Kaufmann’s book, *Inclusive Creative Movement and Dance* (such as having students learn about and utilize axial movements, having them practice moving their bodies on different levels—low, middle, high—and having them demonstrate different characteristics of objects and events through their bodies rather than words). I also made sure to include elements to my lesson that coincided with my students’ personal interests, as well as those of their grade level peers, utilizing UDL (such as type of music used, choices in how to move around the room, incorporating pictures and video, and offering choices in materials, and in expressions of knowledge). These elements also supported assisting students in maintaining a calm and regulated state, helping with the prevention of any stress triggers that could cause amygdala hijacks or meltdowns. Additionally, I used positive behavior supports to help students learn something new, interact with their peers, and to help them participate in the lesson. This was especially helpful for the students who were self-contained and required extra support. For the lesson, students performed the scene of the flood during Glacial Lake Missoula, moved around the classroom, and were able to demonstrate ideas and understanding through their bodies. Finally, the lesson incorporated visualization (creating air paintings) and cooperative learning to create sketches that would then be used as the subject matter for our two murals, as
well as being a summative assessment of what they had learned. The lesson can be found in Appendix E.

After creating the lesson, I put together a chart with all 20 grade level teachers’ names, and started contacting them one grade level at a time to plan a convenient time and date to collaborate. I made sacrifices with my schedule to make these lessons work: rearranging my schedule, teaching during my preparation period, delaying my lunch, and working afterhours, all in an effort to make this project successful. Time was difficult, and the unpredictability of having support staff absent without substitute teachers, were challenges I was determined to overcome in order to hold to the agreed upon times for my lessons. Additionally, my special education colleague faced many challenges this year, and was unable to participate in most of the history and art lessons that were taught. With each challenge I faced, I creatively overcame it and made sure that I did not cancel a single lesson due to insufficient support. By this point, it was getting closer to the end of the school year, so I started planning on the possibility of not being able to complete both murals before summer. If that were the case, I wanted to ensure that the fifth grade classes would get a chance to paint the mural this year, since they would matriculate to middle school next year. I decided that I would save other grade levels for last in the event I was unable to teach all of them this school year. Dividing the scheduled lessons by grade level would make it easier to track who did not get a chance to participate in the mural this year. However, my ultimate aim was to make sure I completed both murals this year.

Since I needed to teach this lesson to fifth grade as soon as possible to ensure they were included in the mural painting, and since they had not yet had the ability awareness lesson, I decided to blend the history lesson and ability awareness lesson together for them. I contacted the fifth grade teachers, and started teaching my lesson to their classes. I also presented the
lesson to the older grades as one that would enable everyone to participate, regardless of ability. This was partly due to the blending of the ability awareness lesson with the Glacial Lake Missoula history and art lesson, and partly due to them already learning about Glacial Lake Missoula before my lesson. I then turned the lesson for the fifth grade into the lesson for third through fifth grade, and the previous history and art lesson as the lesson for kindergarten through second grade, since they had already been taught the ability awareness lesson.

After I began teaching the mural sketch lesson, which included the history of Glacial Lake Missoula, the arts, and, for the older grades, the ability awareness lesson, I then met with my principal to discuss when and where we could start painting the first mural for half of the school. We decided on the cafeteria, and through collaboration with the kitchen staff and custodians, we came up with times that would work best for everyone involved. I then took these times and chose a date that would work best for my colleague and me to facilitate the painting of the mural for an entire day. We then requested substitute teachers to fill in for us, and officially set our date. I also contacted the art teacher informing her of the murals and inviting her to be a part of this project as well. To allow teachers the convenience of choosing times that worked best for them, I set up an account on Sign Up Genius (signupgenius.com), and created a schedule with different time slots that would allow them to choose times most convenient for them. I created a letter for the parents informing them of the project and offered an invitation for them to participate alongside their child. I also made sure to notify the support specialists, resource teachers, special area teachers (music, physical education, etc.), kitchen staff, and custodians of what was going on and when. Additionally, I contacted the PTO, welcoming them to be a part of this.
We had two full days of painting in the cafeteria, where teachers would send half of their classes down to us every 15 minutes. This allowed for each class to work with a different class, as well as the students from the ERC. All students were able to paint with different classes, and the students from the self-contained room joined their general education classes to paint. Some of the students from the ERC also assisted other grade levels while they painted. Parents, teachers, and students all worked together to complete the murals, with the support of administration, custodians, and kitchen staff members. The two murals were completed and will be displayed in the upstairs wings by the large windows, with the district carpenters creating wooden ledges to support the panels. The timeline of events can be found in Appendix B, and pictures of the entire process can be found in Appendix F.

**The Outcome**

After the lessons were taught, students were more welcoming and accepting of their peers with disabilities. After this project, more of the student body knew the names of their peers with disabilities, would greet them, initiate conversation, ask questions about them, interact with them, and include them in more activities. The teachers were very supportive of the lessons, with many of them expressing their gratitude for the lessons, thanking us for the opportunity, and requesting more collaboration in the future. Furthermore, each part of the project had additional outcomes, discussed below.

**Art Lessons in the ERC**

The result of the art lessons taught to the self-contained class in the ERC was very successful. I began teaching once a week art classes in the ERC to the students who never receive art instruction. I started my lessons by incorporating preferred items, such as their favorite characters (the Muppets) or activities (pouring water), and multiple choices (UDL) into
my art lessons. I chose therapeutic music, starting with Mozart, to see if that could help with creating a calm environment and mood, while also inspiring the students to work, as suggested by Doidge (2015). The Mozart music alone did not seem to have an effect on the students. One student with significant behavioral challenges did not stay calm and productive solely on the basis of being exposed to Mozart during my lessons. I then incorporated desks and required the students to sit in them. The desks helped establish a clearly defined space, which is important for students who are not comfortable being within close proximity to others. Although the desks helped with addressing space concerns, they did not single-handedly resolve behavioral or participation issues. I then started implementing positive behavior supports during my lessons. I gave the students a reason to work, and motivated them to do certain art tasks independently based off of their preferred reinforcers. I then changed the music from Mozart to that of the students’ favorite songs. Additionally, I started keeping an eye on the students’ emotional states and evaluating whether or not they were showing signs of fatigue. If so, I would have them request a break and then give them 30 seconds of just watching a timer (which they chose to do for the 30 second break). After rewarding the students with a reinforcer for completing each step of a task, maintaining a pleasant environment by using music they preferred, utilizing breaks, and having clearly defined areas for each student, we went from at least one incident per art lesson, to zero. No longer were the students trying to run out of the room, leaving their assigned seats, or engaging in aggressive behaviors (kicking, throwing, hitting, etc.). Instead, I had students fully participating in the art lessons, trying to do tasks independently, and trying new materials and activities. I had one student who started off participating in my lessons by sitting in a tent, far away from me, and dictating to an adult when to start or stop cutting a piece of paper (with the adult saying, “Ready, set…” and the student saying “Go!”) but not doing a single
portion of the activity independently), to standing up and painting a surface for an entire 10 minutes independently, and even requesting more paint. After the success of the art lessons in the ERC, I was able to have the students go beyond working on things that they preferred, and expanded to more traditional art activities where they would experiment with whatever was presented before them. This prepared them for the expectations of the mural lesson. Although the research has stated that students with disabilities should not have to be expected to prepare for the general education setting, some of the students I work with did have to be prepared for a change in their routine, environment, and expectations for working with art materials. Using the entire school year to get some of my students accustomed to these new art activities and routines was very helpful for them, and contributed to their success with the painting of the murals.

The Ability Awareness Lesson

For most of the Ability Awareness Lesson, the grade level teachers stayed in their classrooms to watch and participate. The teachers were interested in what we taught about understanding students with disabilities, and many of them thanked us for teaching their class. The students were engaged, and had many questions. In the beginning of the lesson, many students wanted to point out who had disabilities in their classroom, and did not quite understand that pointing out a disability can make someone feel uncomfortable. After the lesson, the majority of the classes understood that it is important to talk about what all people can do, instead of what they cannot do, and many shared stories of situations where they were uncomfortable talking about their own struggles and differences. The students enjoyed learning how to integrate students with disabilities into their social groups, and many wanted to share examples of how to include their peers with varying abilities into their favorite activities. They appreciated the reward they were given for good behaviors and participating in the lesson (PBS),
and were all very excited to participate in the mural project in the future. Additionally, the school counselor demonstrated that she learned more about interacting with students with disabilities, as she would frequently join in the lesson and explain a lot of the information we were teaching to the students when they would ask questions. Prior to this lesson, she had asked for information on how to teach students to work with students with disabilities, and had sought out assistance from the special education department. This project was the perfect opportunity to present answers to her questions. After the lesson, many of the students we taught would go out of their way to greet my students, and were much more patient and understanding when some of my students were presenting challenging behaviors.

The Introduction to Mural Lesson

This lesson ended up being a lot of fun for everyone involved. The students all participated, smiling throughout the activities, and thanked me for teaching the lesson after it was over. Most of the teachers also participated in the lesson, demonstrated the movements, and even thanked me for teaching it to their class. I had several requests to collaborate again, and many compliments on how creative and fun the lesson was. Most of the students were comfortable with the movement activities, they enjoyed the addition of the music, which helped them stay calm while moving around the room, they appreciated having choices for expression (UDL) in both how to move and what and how they wanted to draw, and everyone demonstrated joy in the performance of the flooding of Glacial Lake Missoula. The cooperative learning was very successful for almost every single student, with only two students from the entire student body requesting to create their own sketch without their peers. Students were creative in their portrayal of the different concepts learned through the use of their bodies, and demonstrated that they had a better understanding of the events that took place in Glacial Lake Missoula after
having the opportunity to perform their scenes. Questions were asked before and after the lesson to check for comprehension and to assess if students gained more knowledge about the topic, and each class was able to explain the events in detail after the lesson was completed. Additionally, rules were given beforehand about expectations and how to work safely and cooperatively, which helped guide the students through the project and prevent any issues (PBS). This lesson generated significantly more excitement for the mural, and also demonstrated to teachers and students how lessons can be adjusted to include all students, regardless of ability. Finally, for the teachers who participated in the lesson, they were able to see demonstrations of UDL and PBS throughout the session, in a fun and engaging way, without feeling as if they were being lectured on how to teach, or having their classes intruded upon. I am optimistic that they will apply some of these techniques in their own lessons, given the request for more collaboration between them and me. I am looking forward to demonstrating more ways of including all students into lessons in their classrooms and hope that they will be inspired to do the same.

**The Painting of the Mural**

To create the design for the mural, the student body produced sketches during my Introduction to Mural Lesson. These sketches were then voted on by the ERC staff, by placing post-it notes on sketches that had some elements that the team favored, such as the drawing of a mastodon on one sketch, or the creative design of mountains on another. The favored sketches were then placed around the room and elements were taken from most of them and compiled into a final design, with me reproducing the students’ work as close to their original as possible. Without time constraints, I would have liked to have put the sketches on a website and had the entire school (students and staff) look at all of the sketches and vote on their favorites. I would have also liked to have had the student artists reproduce their images on the large scale design,
instead of me doing it. However, time constraints, and an approaching deadline, would not allow for these ideas.

Next, I reproduced the sketch on a large sheet of white paper, with the help of my invaluable ERC team measuring, cutting, and taping large sheets of paper together so we could have a single sheet of paper aligned perfectly with the Lexan panels. Members of the ERC team then helped me trace the drawing with black and red marker, so that we could flip the design over and trace it on the back, due to the image needing to be in reverse for the style of painting we would be using. After retracing the lines with markers on the reverse side, the design was ready to be painted by the students.

On painting day, I was without a substitute teacher for my students and so was my colleague. Because we were short staffed, my colleague was only able to spend a limited portion of the day helping me with the facilitation of the painting of the mural. However, I had one amazing parent volunteer who stayed throughout the day, helping with the entire process. Other members of the ERC team also assisted wherever needed, contributing to the successful completion of the first mural.

In the morning on painting day, the ERC team and I brought the very large and heavy Lexan panels downstairs to the cafeteria. When we brought the panels down to set up for painting, the students eating breakfast in the cafeteria were elated when they saw the panels. They became very interested and excited, asking if they would get a chance to paint. This then caused a rippling effect of excitement, with teachers and other faculty and staff members stopping by to see what the painting surface looked like. Additionally, the custodial staff helped us with organizing the placement of the panels, moving them, and setting them up throughout the
day. I was amazed and honored at how so many people were willing to help and be a part of this project, making it truly a schoolwide event.

Before students started arriving, I outlined which classes would paint each section of the mural so that I could ensure everyone had a chance to contribute equally. Once it was time for teachers to send their students down to the cafeteria at their scheduled times, they did so punctually and happily. Some teachers even joined their class for their painting session. Students were given paint brushes, containers, and paint, and were instructed on where to apply their brush strokes. While waiting for their turn, students listened to the instructions for this project and eagerly watched others paint. The wonderful parent volunteer put together the palettes for the students while I gave instructions, directed students on where to paint, when to paint, and where to go after they painted, as well as maintained order and a calm working environment. The parent volunteer also assisted students with their painting, as well as where to go after they were finished, and helped to maintain order in the cafeteria. Additionally, each one of my students painted with their peers, and the students from the ERC came down to participate and contribute to the mural painting as well, with one of them participating with multiple classes throughout the day.

Once the day ended, we had eleven classes who completed one mural. There was an ongoing positive buzz around the school that day, with many smiling faces and proud students. After the paint dried, my colleague and I, along with the help of the custodians, displayed the completed mural in a temporary location above the main stairwell so it could be viewed by the school while waiting for its support structure to be built for its final resting place. Students and staff members gathered around the mural, congratulated us on a job well done, and were excited for the second one to be completed. There were even students who took their parents up to the
mural and proudly showed them where they painted. We then set up the date for the second mural painting, but this time had the art teacher join us, and completed our second mural with the rest of the student body.
CONCLUSION

My intention with this project was to have every student in the school participate in the creation of a schoolwide mural project that would facilitate inclusive education, allow students who are self-contained in the ERC to interact with their peers, promote inclusive education to the faculty and staff of the school, produce friendship-making opportunities for my students with significant special needs, collaborate with my colleagues, and create fun and engaging all-inclusive lessons that would incorporate fine arts integration. After completing this ambitious project, I was able to not only accomplish what I set out to do, but also had the opportunity to get to know grade level teachers who I previously had very little interaction with, and promote movement and the arts in the general education setting. I had the opportunity to meet and work with every student in the school, build rapport with grade level students I had not had a chance to know prior to this, collaborate with parents and community members, and ultimately bring special education into every classroom, instead of keeping it hidden away in the self-contained ERC. Although this project took a lot of hard work, dedication, planning, creative problem solving, and time, in the end it was one of the most rewarding and beneficial experiences of my career. Never before have I undertaken such a grand endeavor, nor would I have done so without the training, support, and inspiration from the Creative Pulse. My experience from the Creative Pulse taught me how to overcome obstacles for the betterment of my students’ education, and led me down a path that motivated me to “go big” without wilting underneath the weight of perceived challenges. After participating in expressive movement around a room, performing on stage numerous times, doing stand-up comedy, directing and acting in plays, and dancing on stage in front of an audience, I am no longer afraid to try new and adventurous tasks that require me to be in unfamiliar types of situations. I see the tremendous benefit of “going
big,” and want to continue to do so for my students. I plan on continuing to facilitate large scale all-inclusive collaboration projects with my school community, and to continue collaborating with colleagues, parents, and other community members. I am truly grateful for the willingness, flexibility, and accepting attitude from everyone who collaborated with me on this project, as well as the opportunity to engage in a project such as this because of the Creative Pulse. Simply put, this program changed my life.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

References


APPENDIX A

Annotated Bibliography


A collection of stories by graduate students who share their experiences as first year teachers in inclusive settings. Each story discusses the benefits, challenges, and lessons learned from the authors’ perspectives, and offers a glimpse into the reality of inclusive education in an urban secondary education setting for new special education teachers.


Dr. Norman Doidge, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, writes about neuroplasticity (the brain’s ability to change its structure and function through activity and mental experience) and how it can be used to heal mental illnesses, pain, and disabilities. The brain is able to change its neural structure without invasive approaches, such as drugs and surgery. Although drugs and surgery may be needed at times, they are not the only method, or even best method, of healing the brain. This book combines Western and Eastern practices to give an alternative to medicine and surgery, emphasizing the importance of connecting the mind, brain, and body to heal the brain. Methods of healing include deep meditation, sound therapy, light therapy, and vibration therapy.


Marilyn Friend and William D. Bursuck discuss inclusive practices and develop a guide for general education teachers to educate them on what inclusive education is, how to implement it, and why it is important. The book addresses several different topics and strategies, ranging from special education history, policies, and law, to planning instruction in inclusive settings that meets the needs of diverse students. Other topics include: discussion on how students with disabilities get special education services, and what those services are; collaborating with families and other professionals; assessing students with special needs; planning instruction in inclusive settings; describing and providing examples of low-incidence and high-incidence disabilities—what they are and how to accommodate students with those disabilities; describing other disabilities and how to accommodate those as well (such as attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder); differentiating instruction – what it is and how to implement it; fostering and developing independent learning for all students in the classroom; evaluating and grading
students with disabilities who are included in the general education setting; and responding to student behaviors through effective classroom management and positive behavior supports.


In this book Howard Gardner discusses the stages of human development, touching specifically on Piaget’s theory (sensory motor, symbol systems and intuitive, concrete-operational, and formal operations), artistic development (scribbling, representational) and his own theory of development (intuitive, symbolic, notational, formal disciplinary knowledge). He stresses the importance of art education, that it should be incorporated across the curriculum, and how it enhances learning. Finally, he discusses how art can be used in schools to enhance learning and development in multiple academic areas.


Howard Gardner delves into the arts and their relationship to human development. He discusses the different stages of development in humans and animals; talks about studies on aesthetics; how writing and artistic creation begin through scribbles, evolving into symbols, and then representational forms; he goes over child art, play, and music; and discusses mastery of the arts, their connection to creativity, and science. Finally, Gardner discusses personality traits of artists and scientists, and the relationship between art and neurosis, psychosis, and truth.


In this book, Howard Gardner thoroughly describes each intelligence from his theory of multiple intelligences. Linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and the personal intelligences are all discussed.


This is an informative book about the brain, and how emotional intelligence affects the way the brain thinks and works. Ranging from stress triggers, amygdala hijacks, self-calming techniques, and neurogenesis, this book thoroughly explains what emotions do on a scientific level and how to create optimal performance based on the knowledge gained. It clearly demonstrates the interconnectedness of the brain and body.

This article was about a study regarding art as an assessment tool for reading comprehension. Students were taught a language arts literacy lesson with a hands-on art project that was used to assess their learning of the content. There were many benefits to incorporating art in this study, demonstrating strong links between reading comprehension and art creation.


This book describes how to utilize positive behavior supports in the classroom. It discusses the theory of positive behavior supports, the benefits of utilizing interventions through positive behavior supports, and the negative effects of using punishment. It goes over, in great detail, the different tiers, who benefits from each tier, and how to do a functional behavioral assessment. Finally, it breaks the process down into clear and understandable steps so that readings can begin utilizing its practices effectively.


In this book, Karen Kaufmann discussed how to incorporate dance education and movement into the general education setting, and how movement and dance lessons can be inclusive for all students. The book starts with an explanation of inclusive education, special education law and policies (IDEA, least restrictive environment, IEPs, people first language, etc.), and various disabilities. It then delves into movement and brain development (bodily-kinesthetic intelligence), the benefits of dance and movement (physical, emotional, social, intellectual), and discusses different strategies for incorporating dance and creative movement in the classroom. Also included in the book are different strategies to use with varying disabilities, how dance and creative movement connect to various disciplines, and several examples of dance and movement activities that can be used by teachers of any subject area.


A chart about the evolution of society’s paradigm shifts from before the 1980s to current day. This chart displays the changes of services, supports, and viewpoints for people with disabilities. It discusses the different eras, the various types of settings used to provide services, how services were organized, and what the overall objectives were. This chart offers a glimpse into the attitudes toward people with disabilities through the decades.

In this book, Whitney H. Rapp and Katrina L. Arndt discuss inclusive education, what it is, why it is important, and how it is based on a belief system—specifically, the attitude that everyone can learn. Also included in this book is the history of special education, disabilities, and regular education in the United States. Interventions for students with special needs are discussed, including inclusive education theory and practice, classroom management, universal design for learning, assessment, collaboration, instructional strategies for content areas, and resources for comprehensive teaching.


This article discusses the benefits of peers and how they influence each other’s lives. The authors stressed that understanding peers and their relationships to others increases the understanding of personality development. Group socialization theory was also discussed.


This book thoroughly discusses the discriminatory laws of our country’s past, referred to as the ugly laws, that targeted and affected the lives of people who were perceived as ugly, deformed, and bothersome in appearance. Schweik delves into the history of the laws, the public resistance to them, and how they stigmatized and oppressed people of all kinds, including those with disabilities.
APPENDIX B

Timeline of Events

- August 19th: Collaborated and discussed ideas with ERC special education colleague.
- September 11th: Obtained permission by administration.
- October 5th: PTO meeting—presented proposal.
- October 14th: PTO approval for funding the Lexan panels.
- October 30th: Meeting with principal to discuss funds for the art supplies – approval for supplies from the Fine Arts Department.
- November 19th: Presented mural project to faculty and staff at staff meeting.
- November 25th: Mural panels ordered.
- December 2nd: Collaboration meeting with colleague to discuss lesson plans for mural.
- December 4th: Mural panels arrived.
- March 22nd: Started Introduction to Mural Lesson.
- May 3rd: Painted first mural, with colleague, parent volunteer, and half of the student body.
- May 14th: Walked for Creative Pulse graduation.
- May 26th: Started painting second mural, with colleague, art teacher, parent volunteer, and most of the second half of the student body.
- May 31st: Completed second mural.
- July 11th: Creative Pulse Defense with Committee for professional paper and project.
- August 2016: Graduate from the Creative Pulse.
APPENDIX C – Proposal

Everyone Can Paint!

What Our Plan Is

Our goal is to allow all of the students in our school the opportunity to participate in the creation of two historically scenic murals. The dimensions of each mural would be approximately 96 x 60” (8 by 5 feet), and would be done on Lexan panels (a clear polycarbonate [PC] and PC-Based resins). The two murals would cover the windows by the ledges on the second floor on opposite ends of the school, creating aesthetically pleasing views, as well as serving a functional purpose.

Why We Want to Do This

The mural project would serve three purposes:

- Exploring prosocial ways of interacting with peers with disabilities.
- Implementing inclusion for our students, giving them a chance to work with their grade-level peers (each of our students in the ERC room would be participating in this with their general education class).
- Keeping students safe (current and future, particularly those still learning to maintain safe behavior) by blocking the ledge to prevent them from climbing up the window.

***Additionally, this mural would incorporate a history lesson about Glacial Lake Missoula.

Academics and Skills We Want To Teach

History (local)
Language Arts Literacy (research—typing, reading)
Math (measuring, proportion)
Technology (researching online with search engines)
Art (elements and principles of design, color theory, painting)
Social (inclusion, collaboration, etiquette and social norms)
Communication (receptive, expressive, joint-attention)
Scope of the Project:

Our intention with this project is to invite every student in the school to participate in this project as a way to facilitate inclusion, allowing students who are self-contained to interact with their peers. It is our hope that through this project students who do not know how to interact with students with severe disabilities would learn to be able to do so. This would be done through the creation of two historically scenic murals. The murals would be done on Lexan with acrylic paint, creating a stained glass effect, which would then be placed in front of the large windows by the ledges on the second floor.

The purpose of this mural project is to explore prosocial ways of interacting with peers with disabilities, and to implement inclusion for all students.

Additionally, this would incorporate collaboration with other teachers and faculty members in the school, and a historical lesson on Glacial Lake Missoula.

Approaches, Methods, Procedures:

We plan on splitting the school in half to create the two murals. One half of the classes would work on one mural, the other half on the second mural. There are approximately 20 classes, which would be divided evenly.

We would like to meet with every grade level teacher (those interested in having their students participate in the creation of this mural) to discuss the implementation of the Glacial Lake Missoula lesson. We would gather feedback from the other teachers and collaborate together to see how this would work best for each teacher, their students, and the students in the ERC. The needs and desires of each teacher, class, and ERC student, would determine the when, where, and duration of the lesson. After meeting with each teacher, we would then teach the lesson to their classes.

Students will learn about the history of Glacial Lake Missoula, how to interact with their peers with disabilities, and about the artist Monte Dolack, whose “Return of Lake Missoula” painting will be the inspiration for the mural designs.
Background:

Desiree Valentino and Neil Murray are Extended Resource Classroom (ERC) special education teachers. Additionally, Desiree is a certified art teacher, and Neil is a certified social studies teacher. We teach students with severe disabilities, some of who are in a self-contained classroom all day. We would like to get our students out of the self-contained classroom and interacting with their grade-level peers. We believe that students with disabilities learn best when they are interacting with their non-disabled peers, and that students without disabilities can be more accepting and understanding of students with disabilities through interaction and awareness. We would like to accomplish this through our school-wide mural project.

Timeline:

- Before the end of September, gain approval from administration.
- Before the end of October, determine where the funding will come from.
- Before the end of November, order supplies.
- Before the end of December, begin teaching the history lesson to students, starting with the 5th grade.
- Before the end of January, continue teaching the history lesson to students.
- Before the end of February, begin teaching the art lesson to students, starting with the 5th grade.
- Before the end of March, continue teaching the art lesson to the students.
- Before the end of April, begin painting the murals.
- Before the end of the school year, complete the murals.

Anticipated Results and Hopes:

Our anticipated results and hopes for this project would be a completed mural, friendships formed between students with and without disabilities, and a memorable experience for everyone involved. Also, the advent of another mural project being created the following year, turning this into a living mural with an emphasis on lessons learned and the overall experience.

Books for Teaching about Interacting with Students with Disabilities:

- “Susan Laughs” by Jeanne Willis (grades K-1)
- “Squirmy Wormy” by Lynda Farrington Wilson (grades 2-3)
- “My Brother Charlie” by Holly Robinson Peete (grades 4-5)
### What We Need

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APPENDIX D

ABILITY AWARENESS LESSON (Grades K-2)

- Mrs. Valentino and Mr. Murray introduce themselves.
- Explain our roles in the school.
- Explain disabilities, what they are, different types.
- Show video about autism.
- Discuss do’s and don’ts for how to interact with and respect people with disabilities.
- Read story.
- Discuss the mural project.

Teacher Notes:

People come in all different shapes, sizes, and abilities. We are all different in our own way. Some people have what we call a disability.

What is a disability? It is a condition that someone has that makes them need more help than others. A disability can be something you see, such as a person in a wheelchair because they cannot walk; or something you do not see, such as a person with autism who has a disability in their brain. There are many different kinds of disabilities.

Disabilities can sometimes make it difficult for a person to talk with others, play with others, and sometimes behave like others. A person with a disability may not understand if they do something wrong, so you have to tell them nicely, such as, “Please don’t put your face close to mine, it makes me feel uncomfortable.” Just because they do not understand how to play does not mean they do not want to play. You can be a friend and play with them, they just might need a little extra help sometimes.

We’re going to show you a video about a brain disability called autism. With autism, you can’t see the disability because it is inside a person’s brain. We do not know what causes it or why people have it, but it is something a person has forever. Here is a video about autism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtRYKjucDHk

Just because all of us are a little bit different in our own way, does not mean we do not all have things in common and like to do similar things. It also doesn’t mean that we can’t be friends with each other. How many people like to have friends to play with? How many people like to eat pizza? How many people like Play-doh? How many people like to go on the swings? These are things that a lot of us like to do, whether we have a disability or not.
Let’s discuss how to interact with people with disabilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do talk to the person like you normally talk to everyone else.</td>
<td>Don’t talk to the person like a baby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do look at the person and smile just like you would to anyone else.</td>
<td>Don’t point, laugh, stare at, ignore, or make fun of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do talk about what a person can do.</td>
<td>Don’t talk about what a person can’t do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do tell them “no thank you,” or “please stop, I don’t like it when you do that” if the person does something that you don’t like.</td>
<td>Don’t let a person do something that bothers you without telling them how you feel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do ask if a person needs help, and offer assistance if they need it.</td>
<td>Don’t assume that a person needs help. It’s important that they learn how to do things on their own, just like you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do learn from a person with a disability. They know many things and can teach you about things you don’t know about.</td>
<td>Don’t think you can’t get help or learn from a person with a disability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read and discuss book.

This is how people might be different in their own way, and remember that we all do things that are different in our own way. The important thing is that we can have all different kinds of friends—friends with disabilities and friends without disabilities. It’s important that we work together, find things that we have in common, and treat everyone just like we would want to be treated.

Talk about mural.
APPENDIX E

Introduction to Mural Lesson (Grades K-2)

Time: Approximately 45 minutes
Location: Grade level classes
Grades: K-2
Materials: Laptop with speakers for music, or CD player
CD containing music without lyrics, or YouTube loaded with music
Large sheets of white paper
Pencils
Crayons

Objectives: The students will be able to
- Discover the events of Glacial Lake Missoula, and the cause for scarring on Mt. Jumbo
- Utilize their bodies to imitate characteristics of the following words: rock, ice, water; and use creative movement to explore the events of Glacial Lake Missoula.
- Create a visual representation of the events of Glacial Lake Missoula through cooperative learning and visual art.

Warm Up: 5 minutes
- Students will stand in a large circle. We will mark an “X” with our feet—that is our place to stand (axial position).
- Stretch way up high, shrink down low.
- Brain Gym: Gently tap from head to toes (fingers, then hands).
- Brain Dance: Split body in half (top/bottom and left/right), only move one side at a time.

Preparing for Activity: 10 minutes
Have students practice the following movements in their X spots:
Rock – huge, stiff, slow, mountain
Ice – cold, solid, gigantic, melting, glacier
Water – flow, waves, roll, flood, lake

Have students do each of the movements while moving around the room to music, then incorporate the following levels (cue the music):
High
Middle
Low

Have students freeze, and circle back up again. Discuss Glacial Lake Missoula and what happened, have students act out the different events at their axial positions with the movements they practiced.
Activity: 10 minutes

Have students act out the Glacial Lake Missoula event together as a whole group through a whole group “dance.” Ask for volunteers to be the mountains—have them stiffly and slowly move around in a circle. Then ask for volunteers to be the glacier, wedging into the mountain—cold and stiff. Then ask for a few volunteers to represent the water—melting off the glacier and flowing around the inside of the mountain ring. As the glacier is melting, the mountains are being scarred—have the mountains demonstrate the scarring. Instruct the rest of the glaciers to start melting and forming into the water. Have the water flow faster, and then (carefully!) break through the glaciers. Have all students represent the flooding by producing waves around the room, spreading from Montana to Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.

Visual Art Integration: 15 Minutes

Students then visualize the ice dam from Glacial Lake Missoula, the breaking of the dam with the massive flood, and the after effects of the flood. The students will close their eyes and envision what happened. Then the students will choose what part of the event they want to make a painting of: before the flood, during the flood, or after the flood. Have them make an “air painting” by taking their fingers and painting what they see in their minds into the air—have music playing in the background. Have students finish their air painting and then group up (same groups as before or at table spots). Give them a large sheet of paper, writing utensils, and crayons. As a group, students create a scene from Glacial Lake Missoula (before, during, or after the flood), inspired by their air paintings, and their whole-group movement activity.

Closure: 5 Minutes

What did Glacial Lake Missoula look like? Students see the images on the Interwrite Board, as they share their sketches with the class.

Why did we learn about this? Students see the scarring (horizontal lines) on Mount Jumbo and learn how those were formed. They are encouraged to look for them the next time they see the mountain. Students are also told about the mural project, and that the sketches will be used in a contest to see which ones will represent the two murals that the school paints.

Inspiration and Resource:
Introduction to Mural Lesson (Grades 3-5)

Time:  Approximately 45 minutes
Location: Grade level classes
Grades:  3-5
Materials:  
- CD player
- Lindsay Sterling CD
- Large sheets of white paper
- Pencils

Objectives: The students will be able to
- Explore prosocial ways of interacting with peers with disabilities.
- Discover the events of Glacial Lake Missoula, and the cause for scarring on Mt. Jumbo
- Utilize their bodies to imitate characteristics of the following words:  rock, ice, water; and use creative movement to explore the events of Glacial Lake Missoula.
- Create a visual representation of the events of Glacial Lake Missoula through cooperative learning and visual art.

Introduction:  8 minutes
- Introduce Mrs. Valentino and Mr. Murray – what they do in the school, who they work with.
- Discuss the two different kinds of disabilities – disabilities that can be seen, disabilities that cannot be seen.
- Show 3 minute video:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtRYKjucDHk
- Explain that students with disabilities want to make friends and have fun in school too. How can they be included in activities if they cannot talk, hear, see, etc.?
- Introduce movement activity.

Warm Up:  2 minutes
- Students will stand in a large circle. We will mark an “X” with our feet—that is our place to stand (axial position).
- Stretch way up high, shrink down low.
- Brain Gym: Gently tap from head to toes (fingers, then hands).
- Brain Dance: Split body in half (top/bottom and left/right), only move one side at a time.

Preparing for Activity:  5 minutes
- Have students practice the following movements in their X spots:
  Rock – huge, stiff, slow, mountain
  Ice – cold, solid, gigantic, melting, glacier
  Water – flow, waves, roll, flood, lake
- Have students do each of the movements while moving around the room to music, then incorporate the following levels (cue the music):
  High
Middle
Low

Have students freeze, and circle back up again. Discuss Glacial Lake Missoula and what happened, have students act out the different events at their axial positions with the movements they practiced.

Activity: 10 minutes

Have students act out the Glacial Lake Missoula event together as a whole group through a whole group “dance.” Ask for volunteers to be the mountains—have them stiffly and slowly move around in a circle. Then ask for volunteers to be the glacier, wedging into the mountain—cold and stiff. Then ask for a few volunteers to represent the water—melting off the glacier and flowing around the inside of the mountain ring. As the glacier is melting, the mountains are being scarred—have the mountains demonstrate the scarring. Instruct the rest of the glaciers to start melting and forming into the water. Have the water flow faster, and then (carefully!) break through the glaciers. Have all students represent the flooding by producing waves around the room, spreading from Montana to Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.

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Why did we learn about this? Students see the scarring (horizontal lines) on Mount Jumbo and learn how those were formed. They are encouraged to look for them the next time they see the mountain. Students are also told about the mural project, and that the sketches will be used in a contest to see which one will represent the two murals that the school paints.

Inspiration and Resource:
Pictures of Glacial Lake Missoula, Before and After

(Grades K-5)
APPENDIX F – Pictures

Arrival of the panels

Ability Awareness Lesson

Introduction to Mural Lesson
Introduction to Mural Lesson

The painting of the murals

The completed murals

Mural I

Mural II