The Role of Visual Art Instruction in the Special Education Classroom

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Purpose
The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of visual art instruction in special education classrooms.

The Article
America’s standards-based, outcome driven education model undervalues visual art instruction and the result has been systematic exclusion of arts education from curriculum. Research conveys a need to assess the role art instruction has in child development. Therefore, the central question is what role do visual arts play for children with special needs? Bingham et al. (2012) address this question using perceptions from special education teachers using the Very Special Arts (VSA) program. Results from this examination suggest that art education has important benefits for students enrolled in special education.

What this Means for the Field
Data from this study supports existing research from the field which emphasizes the important role that art plays in academic readiness, instruction, student assessment, and social development. Specifically, Bingham et al. (2012) identified three major categorical benefits that special education teachers believe VSA provided in their classrooms; such as improved: (a) student behavior, (b) communication, and (c) learning. Both tangible and intangible benefits were reported. Tangible benefits associated with VSA included positive social interactions, enhanced creativity, and calmer classroom environments. Intangible benefits included improved self-esteem, independence, self-expression, and overall enjoyment for students who participated. As a result, teachers and administrators should consider the positive role that art plays in special education classrooms.

Citation

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