Workshop 3
Addressing the Diverse Needs of Students

Arts teachers face a broad diversity of learners in their classrooms every day. Students come into the classroom with a wide range of experiences and skills in the art form. They come from different cultural and economic backgrounds. They come with different learning styles. Some come with special needs.

Successful high school arts teachers address the diverse needs of their students by:

- Recognizing the unique talents and skills of each student
- Responding to different learning styles
- Acknowledging cultural and economic diversity
- Adapting instruction for students with special challenges

**Learning Goals**

The goals of this workshop session are for you to:

- Identify ways you can adapt your teaching to reach a broader range of learning styles among your students
- Plan adjustments in your teaching to anticipate the needs of students with disabilities
- Identify the hallmarks of culturally responsive teaching and how they can be applied in an arts context

**Web Interactive**

Try the Interactive feature “Focus On Culturally Responsive Teaching” for an introduction to this approach to student diversity, as seen in a playwriting class. Alternatively, use the Interactive after you have watched the program, to reinforce your understanding of the concept. You can find the Interactive on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/hsarts/program3/.
Workshop Session (On Site)

Getting Ready (15 minutes)

Read the following statements about diversity.

To adequately attend to cultural diversity in the classroom, teachers must look first at their own cultural background and understand how their biases affect their interactions with students. Then, teachers can examine the backgrounds and needs of the student population and understand their students' cultural biases as well. Classroom instruction can be designed to connect the content of a course with students' backgrounds.

"Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common."

Center for Adolescent Studies
http://education.indiana.edu/cas/tt/v2i2/cultural.html

Discuss what diversity means to you, your classroom, and your curriculum.

* What kinds of diversity do you find in your classroom?
* How does your arts curriculum address historical and contemporary world cultures, and how does this relate to the cultural background of your students?

Watching the Program (60 minutes)

The information sheets found at the end of this chapter provide helpful background on the schools, arts programs, and individual classes featured in each segment.

Consider the following questions as you watch the program. You may stop the video after each segment to discuss the questions with your colleagues.

**Theatre: Stephen DiMenna [Playwriting]**

* What specific strategies did Stephen use to engage shy students? Inattentive students? Reluctant writers?
* How do you encourage students to draw on their own experiences?

**Visual Art: Jan Wilson and Bonnie Cusack [Special Needs and Honors Students]**

* How did Jan construct this lesson so that both groups of students benefited from the experience?
* How do you adapt your instruction to accommodate students' learning styles and special needs?

**Music: Carmen Laboy [General Music Class/Intermediate Band/Concert Band]**

* Across the three classes, in what ways does Carmen change her teaching approach, and in what ways does she remain consistent?
* How does your program provide for varying levels of interest and talent among your students?

**Dance: Mary Harding and Tom Kanthak [Dance for Non-Majors]**

* How did Mary and Tom tap into their students' learning styles to help them understand and enjoy work in the dance studio?
* How do you take advantage of the different learning styles in your classroom?
Activities and Discussion (45 minutes)

Part I: Learning Styles and Teaching Methods (25 minutes)

Read the following passage about learning styles:

Students take in and process information in different ways: by seeing and hearing, reflecting and acting, reasoning logically and intuitively, analyzing and visualizing steadily and sporadically. Teaching methods also vary. Some teachers lecture, others demonstrate or lead students to self-discovery; some focus on principles and others on applications; some emphasize memory and others understanding.

The idea is not to teach each student exclusively according to his or her preferences, but rather to strive for a balance of instructional methods. If the balance is achieved, students will be taught partly in a manner they prefer, which leads to an increased comfort level and willingness to learn, and partly in a less preferred manner, which provides practice and feedback in ways of thinking and solving problems which they may not initially be comfortable with but which they will have to use to be fully effective professionals.

From “Learning Styles” by Richard M. Felder
http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Learning_Styles.html

Use the Learning Styles and the Arts Worksheet on the following page to chart connections between your arts curriculum and students’ different learning styles.
The boxes already filled in represent some of the most obvious fits between art forms and learning styles. Go down the list for your art form, and identify places in your curriculum where you address the less obvious learning styles—or where you might try to do so.

**Learning Styles and the Arts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th>Dance</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Theatre</th>
<th>Visual Art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading music, Painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Acting</td>
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<td>Auditory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sequential</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing artworks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading and playing music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improvising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesthetic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dancing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tactile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Writing a play</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Developed from “Learning Styles and Strategies” by Richard M. Felder and Barbara A. Soloman
http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/ILSdir/styles.htm

As a group, discuss which learning styles you think are easiest to address, and which are hardest to address. See if by sharing strategies across art forms, participants can gain a larger repertoire for addressing challenging learning styles.
Part II: Accommodating Students With Special Needs (20 minutes)

Read and discuss the following passages about the arts and disabilities:

Marcel Proust wrote: “Only through art can we emerge from ourselves and know what another person sees.” When we see art as the universal language that has the ability to unite all people, we understand the importance it has in the lives of people with disabilities. For a person who cannot speak, a dance performance may clearly communicate even the most complicated message. For a person with a mental disability who cannot communicate effectively through words, a painting rich with color and life may say more than verbal sentences ever could. And, for a person who has limited mobility, a song sung with emotion and spirit may elicit movement toward a state of clarity and joy. By engaging in the arts, people with disabilities are able to contribute to our workplaces and communities, help extinguish old stereotypes regarding disability, and create a global culture truly representative of all people.

From Access and Opportunities: A Guide to Disability Awareness—Value of the Arts to People with Disabilities, VSA Arts

All students deserve access to the rich education and understanding that the arts provide, regardless of their background, talents, or disabilities. In particular, students with disabilities, who are often excluded from arts programs, can derive great benefit from them for the same reasons that studying the arts benefits students who are not disabled. As in any area of the curriculum, providing a sound education in the arts depends in great measure on creating access to opportunities and resources.


Use the Special Needs and the Arts Worksheet on the following page to discuss how your arts program provides access and opportunities for students with special challenges.
Go down the list of special needs, and identify where your arts program is providing access and opportunities for students with special challenges—and where it is not.

### Special Needs and the Arts *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Needs</th>
<th>Dance</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Theatre</th>
<th>Visual Art</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobility Impairments</strong></td>
<td>Mobility impairments affect a person's independent movement and cause limited mobility. They may take the form of paralysis, muscle weakness, nerve damage, stiffness of the joints, or lack of balance or coordination.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blindness and Visual Impairments</strong></td>
<td>Visual impairments include conditions such as inability to read with glasses, tunnel vision, and color blindness. People who have congenital blindness have been without sight since early childhood or birth. People who have adventitious blindness lost their sight later in life.</td>
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<td><strong>Deafness and Hearing Impairments</strong></td>
<td>For people who are deaf, the major issue is not their inability to hear, but the challenges they experience in communicating with hearing people. Persons who are deaf choose to communicate in a variety of ways, including speaking, sign language, lip reading, cued speech, and writing.</td>
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<td><strong>Learning Disabilities</strong></td>
<td>Learning disabilities are manifested by significant difficulties in listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, and/or mathematical ability. The primary problems do not involve collecting information (as in sensory disabilities), but in interpreting, translating, or recalling information.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</strong></td>
<td>ADHD or ADD is a persistent pattern of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental Disabilities</strong></td>
<td>Developmental disabilities include brain injury, autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and other neurological impairments.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Developed from “Access and Opportunities: A Guide to Disability Awareness,” VSA Arts
http://www.vsarts.org/x523.xml
Homework

In your journal, describe the students you are teaching right now—their life experiences, the cultural and linguistic backgrounds they draw on, the learning strengths and challenges they present, their disabilities if they have any. If it helps you think more concretely, describe three students who vary along these dimensions.

Then reflect on these questions:

- How do you describe your teaching style, and what sorts of learners does it favor?
- What do you do to “bend” your style toward students who learn in different ways?
- If you see some of your students five years from now, what do you want them to retain from what you taught them?

Web Interactive

As a follow-up to the workshop session, try the Web Interactive “Focus On Culturally Responsive Teaching.” Use it to analyze how a visiting theatre artist takes account of the diverse needs of his students. The Interactive can be found on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/hsarts/program3/index.html.
**About the School**

| Bayard Rustin High School for the Humanities | Type: | Urban/Comprehensive |
| New York, NY | Grades: | 9-12 |
| Students: | 2,400 | Low/Middle socio-economic status |

**About the Residency Program**

| Faculty: | 2 (1 teacher and 1 teaching artist) | Organization: | Theatre Development Fund's Residency Arts Project (RAP). |
| | | Funding: | The residency and the actors are paid for by the Theatre Development Fund. The school matches one third of the funding. |

**Arts Requirement:**

New York has a 1-credit art or music graduation requirement (180 minutes of instruction per week for one year)

**Institutionalization:**

Since filming took place, the Creative Writing Program has expanded, with the continued participation of Stephen DiMenna. It is now a Learning Community within Bayard Rustin High School, called The Institute for Media and Writing.

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**About the Featured Class**

**Creative Writing Course:**

Ninth-graders learn the fundamentals of playwriting through a yearlong residency involving 16 visits by a teaching artist per semester. Students work on writing a one-act play, which professional actors perform at the end of each semester.

Students focus on developing their creative and expressive talents and work on building their communication skills.

**Preparations/Prerequisites:**

For this particular class, students must achieve a 3 (proficiency level) on the New York State eighth-grade ELA exam, which tests basic reading and writing skills.

**Student Motivation:**

Mixed. Each student is motivated by individual concerns, but common factors include a desire to go to college, an interest in creativity, and the excitement of drama and playwriting.

**Student Level:**

Mixed. Most students are novices, but there are a few who are surprisingly experienced in creative writing.

**In the Teacher's Words**

**How does the residency experience introduce the concepts of playwriting?**

Stephen DiMenna: The residency uses four phases to develop students' skills as playwrights:

1. Unlock students' creative voices
2. Teach the form of playwriting
3. Teach the structure of playwriting
4. Explore content for the students' plays
About the School

Nottingham High School
Hamilton, NJ

Type:
Suburban/Comprehensive

Grades:
9-12

Students:
1,450
Very mixed socio-economic status

Arts Requirement:
New Jersey has a 5-credit (one full year) graduation requirement in Visual Art, Music, Dance, or Theatre

About the Visual Art Program

Faculty:
2 full-time

Students:
220

Facilities:
Below Average in Area
• 1 full-time art studio
• 1 shared studio space

Required Courses:
Art Fundamentals or Advanced Fundamentals (first-year students working at an accelerated pace)

Elective Courses:
Drawing & Painting I, Advanced Drawing & Painting II, Sculpture & Ceramics, Mixed Media, Commercial Design & Illustration, and Honors Studio

About the Featured Class

Honors Studio:
Students work independently with a teacher/mentor to develop a portfolio that demonstrates both the depth and breadth of their experience and that explores history and aesthetics through problem solving.

Students work at various points throughout the year with a class of developmentally delayed students who have a wide range of disabilities, from communication or emotional difficulties to perceptual or neurological impairment.

Preparations/Prerequisites:
Eligible students are seniors who have completed Art Fundamentals and a minimum of two other offerings. Students must be able to work independently and complete a contracted body of work throughout the course year.

Student Motivation:
High

Student Level:
Advanced

In the Teacher’s Words

What benefits do you see for the special education students?
Jan Wilson: Many of these students have amazing ideas when it comes to art. They need an environment that will allow them to experiment without fear of failure. It is affirming for them to see themselves be successful. Several students planned to take the Fundamentals class this year as a result of their experience.

What benefits do you see for the honors students?
Jan Wilson: The honors students lose many of the stereotypes and labels often placed on special education students. They begin to understand the challenges faced by students with learning challenges. They have become supporters and even champions of these students in the school population.
### About the School

Christopher Columbus H.S.  
Bronx, NY  
**Type:** Urban/Comprehensive  
**Grades:** 9-12  
**Students:** 4,000  
**Low/Middle socio-economic status**  
**Arts Requirement:** New York has a 1-credit art or music requirement (180 minutes per week for one year)

### About the Instrumental Music Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty:</th>
<th>1 full-time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>175</td>
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</table>
| **Facilities:** | Above Average in the Area  
- Band room  
- Instrument room  
- Multipurpose auditorium |
| **Required Courses:** | None |
| **Elective Courses:** | Beginner Band, Intermediate Band, Concert Band, Jazz Band, and Pep Band |

### About the Featured Classes

**General Music Appreciation:**  
Students study a little bit of everything, including musical instruments, composers and musical eras, and musical forms (opera, symphony, musicals). Students in this class generally are not taking instrumental or vocal music.

**Intermediate Band:**  
Students who have been playing an instrument for a year or two in junior high or have completed one term in Beginner Band participate in this course.  
Students may stay in this class for several terms.  
**Typical Subsequent Course:** Concert Band  
**Student Motivation:** High  
**Student Level:** Novice

**Concert Band:**  
Students who have been playing an instrument for several years and are ready for an advanced band set-up join this group. Students can remain in Concert Band and play in Jazz Band at the same time.  
**Student Motivation:** High  
**Student Level:** Advanced

### In the Teacher’s Words

**What is your goal with the band program?**  
To have the students remain in the band program throughout school. If they’re talented they are encouraged to play in college – sometimes they can get part of their tuition paid.
About the School

Arts High School
Perpich Center for Arts Education
Golden Valley, MN

Type:
Statewide residential program/
Arts-focused public high school

Grades:
11-12

Students:
300
Very mixed socio-economic status

Majors:
Dance, Literary Arts, Media Arts, Music,
Theatre, and Visual Art

About the Dance Program

Faculty:
2 full-time

Students:
20-30 dance majors + 75 non-majors

Facilities:
Above Average in the Area
• 1 large studio
• 2 locker rooms
• 120-seat black box theatre

Focus:
Modern dance-based ensemble program
that welcomes dancers with developed
talent as well as potential.

Required Courses:
Ballet Technique, Composition,
Improvisation, Dance History, Dance
Criticism, Career Explorations, Anatomy
and Somatics, Music for Dance,
Repertory, Guest Artist Residency,
Conditioning, Yoga, and Jazz

Elective Courses:
Modern Dance, Arts Improvisation, Arts
and Ideas, Moving Anatomy, Viewpoints
in Dance and Theatre, and Drumming

Audition:
Movement class, interview, and an arts-
oriented assignment. Prior to the
audition, each student is sent a list of 5
words and asked to bring in a new,
original artwork related to those words.
Dancers must present a short solo in any
style.

About the Featured Class

Moving Anatomy
(for non-dance majors):
Students explore human anatomy
through the lenses of Bartenieff
Fundamentals, improvisation, and
somatic studies. Students learn the
structure and function of the body
through movement exercises and
reflective writing.

Preparations/Prerequisites:
No prerequisites, though students
are majors in other art areas.

Student Motivation:
High

Student Level:
Mixed

In the Teacher’s Words

What are some of the
different learning styles you
see among your non-dance
majors?

Mary Harding: I see a larger
proportion of visual learners. The
theatre students tend to see
narrative in work and they are
highly verbal. In general, these
students sometimes are more
creative and open in improvisation
than the dance majors.
Additional Resources

On the Web

**General Sites**

Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom
http://bokcenter.fas.harvard.edu/docs/hotmoments.html
  Tips for teachers on turning difficult encounters on sensitive subjects into learning opportunities

Theatre Development Fund
http://www.tdf.org/education/
  Select: Residency Arts Project
  Information about the Theatre Development Fund's education programs

VSA Arts
http://www.vsarts.org/
  Extensive resources for educators and artists, dedicated to helping people with disabilities learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts

School and Teacher Sites

Bayard Rustin High School for the Humanities
http://www.insideschools.org/fs/school_profile.php?id =954
  Web site for the school where Stephen DiMenna works with John Loonam and his class on playwriting

Stephen DiMenna
http://www.stephendimenna.com/
  Stephen DiMenna's Web site, including information about his directing and teaching

Nottingham High School
http://www.hamilton.k12.nj.us/secondary/north1/
  Web site for visual art teacher Jan Wilson's school

Christopher Columbus High School
http://www.columbushs.org/index2.html
  Web site for band teacher Carmen Laboy's school

Arts High School Dance Department, Perpich Center for Arts Education
http://www.pcae.k12.mn.us/school/ahs.html
  Select: Program Areas, then Dance
  Information on the dance department where Mary Harding and Tom Kanthak teach

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In Print

**Learning Styles**

  Information and resources to help educators at all levels apply MI theory to curriculum development, lesson planning, assessment, special education, cognitive skills, educational technology, career development, and educational policy

  Ideas for implementing a holistic learning program that seamlessly integrates learning styles and multiple intelligences into instruction, curriculum, and assessment

**Cultural Diversity**

  Classroom-tested strategies and suggestions to improve teaching practice, including responding to diversity and using technology

  August Wilson's play about an African American man and his struggle to relate to his children and the changing world around him in late 1950s America.

  Real-world guidance and suggestions for successful teaching in today's changing classroom environment

**Special Needs**

  Emphasizes best practices for teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings