The Kennedy Center

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WHAT IS THE VSA?

• VSA- Very Special Arts, an affiliate of the Kennedy Center
• The VSA is an international organization with the goal of providing art accessibility to children and adults with disabilities
• Founded in 1974, more then 7 million people participate in the program every year
• Today there are 36 affiliates in the United States, and 52 international affiliates that provide art education
Jean Kennedy Smith

“Art is not a luxury, art is central to what makes us fully human”

• Founder of VSA
• Sister of President F. Kennedy and former U.S. Ambassador to Ireland
• Has first-hand knowledge of difficulties that people with disabilities face as her older sister, Rosemary, had an intellectual disability
• Believes that every person has the right to artistic pursuit and that there should be no barriers to hold back a person from reaching their art goals
PURPOSE OF THE VSA

• The goal of the VSA is to provide educational opportunities in art, access to cultural facilities and the ability to develop appropriate skills for careers in the arts.

• Also work with art educators and schools to prepare to include students with disabilities into art lessons.

• Provides children and adults with disabilities the chance to participate in all aspects of visual and performing art where opportunities would not be available otherwise.

• The organization offers several programs for young artists:
  • VSA Playwright Discovery Program
  • VSA International Young Soloists Program
  • VSA International Art Program
  • VSA Emerging Young Artists Program
    • These are just a few of the many programs offers
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

• In Special Education, art lessons are nearly nonexistent as classes are taught with Common Core Standards for math and English.
• In most cases, teachers are trained to work disabilities into a lesson plan.
• Teachers need to teach off certain standards, and are simply not trained to incorporate art into lesson plans.
• As a result many students with disabilities will not be exposed to art outlets.
FOUR PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE VSA

• Every young person with a disability deserves access to high quality arts learning experiences
• All artists in school and art educators should be prepared to include students with disabilities in their instruction
• All children, youth and adults with disabilities should have complete access to cultural facilities and activities
• All individuals with disabilities who aspire to careers in the arts should have the opportunity to develop appropriate skills.
GUIDING ART EDUCATORS

• Starting in 2013, VSA holds a conference, VSA Intersections: Art and Special Education Conference, in which to discuss research, practice, program development, curricula and policy in regards to the intersection of art education and special education

• The Conference brings together those who seek to see the improvement in special education through the use of the arts

• In addition to the conference, the Kennedy Center offers programming around the integration of arts education and special education
  • Materials include publications, lesson places, activities and webinars
PROS

• Providing art education to children and adults with disabilities when there are no other opportunities given to them
• Offers various programs of art in performing, visual and literary arts
• Offers a platform for participates to showcase their artworks
• Lessons are tailored to adapt to the student, not to the student adapting to the lesson
• Helps to train educators to include art lessons with lesson plans for students with disabilities
• The program works towards the integration of art education and special education
CONS

• There are still states and countries that do not have affiliates