

Summary Notes

Being creative – exploring Art techniques for PMLD and Sensory Learners

A webinar presented by Sonya Mould.

- an experienced PMLD practitioner
- 27 years' experience of teaching children and young people with PMLD
- currently working on a freelance basis supporting young people with PMLD and or brain injury to access education, structure, exciting opportunities, and adventures. Either with in their home through home schooling or in collaboration with school to achieve consistency of approach and continuity when not able to attend school
- passionate about empowering young people with PMLD to be the best they can be, and to have the best adventures possible, to access the world around them, use their own skills and abilities to experience and explore, and most of all to have control over their own choices, environment, and their world
- Senior Mental Health Lead Coach and support SEND SMHL's to progress through the early stages of their SMHL journey

I wanted to deliver this webinar as I feel there are some many lovely activities around art out there for our learners to explore respond to and express their view about different art and techniques.

It may not always seem that these things can be accessible to our learners but with some clever thinking and use of materials our learners will be able to explore art and different techniques.

One thing that I would like you to remember is that art is subjective, it is personal, it is a voyage of discovery and often the journey and processes are where the learning will take place. It is really important to allow your learners the freedom to explore and create in their own way. There is no right or wrong way of producing art, there are just techniques to explore and choices to be made by the individual as to how and where they make marks or cut shapes. I sometimes find that we can become over focussed or worried that the work needs to be perfect or an exact copy of what we are using for inspiration, and sometimes over support, over guide or over prompt our learners, and end up doing too much of the work, this then changes the outcome from their work to being more of our work. So: It is important that we give these learners the freedom to make their marks, see them appear and develop on the page, or make dents in the clay however they may do so, and celebrate their work, frame the work, make a gallery to display the work, show off the work, as it is very special and you want them to feel the pride of their accomplishment.

Through this webinar I am going to look at a few different art techniques and some specific artist as reference and how you may adapt techniques for your learners, I will highlight some considerations when choosing the activities and techniques to explore. As well as how best to involve the senses and skills sets when exploring different techniques. I will include some links to web sites that you may be able to access or adapt as well. I hope you find this interesting and are able to take a few ideas or pointers away with you to try with your learners on their journey to reach their creative potential.

Linking art to your topics

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There are lots of different types of art, artists, craft and crafts people out there that can be explored, depending upon your focus or topic.

It is good to link your arts or crafts to your topic area and identify those artist and techniques that would fit well with the topics – for example – doing a project about Nature and natural spaces, you may want to look at someone like Andy Goldsworthy who uses natural materials and natural spaces for his art and installations. You could explore Materials that he uses:

Which natural materials can you think of that he could use to make sculptures?

- leaves
- twigs
- pebbles
- rocks
- ice
- flowers
- grass
- pine cones
- Have fun with leaves –
- prepare by having collected some leaves/twigs with leaves on from outside– if it is nice, or you learners could help collect the leaves and twigs
- explore the leaves, feel them, waft them, what colours are they, big/small, soft/rough etc. choose which leaves/twigs to use. create a leaf sculpture - Using the double sided sticky taped sheet, encourage the learners to choose leaves/twigs. Support them to grasp them and release them onto the tape, sticking them on. Look at the image/sculpture created.
- Choose some leaves to make prints of – use the underside so the veins show up. Encourage your learners to choose the colour inks or paints to use ink pads are great for this sort of thing, encourage the learner to press down on the leaves, create a selection of leaf prints

If the Topic is 'all about me' – you may want to look at a range of self-portraits created in different mediums and styles. Again if your topic is The Beach or the seaside, there are some lovely natural art and sculpture – either created by or on the beach – like Sandarsan Pattnaik who is a sand artist creating wonderful sand castles (he holds the record for the world's highest sand castle), or you could look at Marc Treanor's who creates sand murals in Pembrokeshire, or even looking at Antony Gormley and his sculptures called "another place", or you could look at Japanese painting and textiles in particular Hokusai and his work of mount Fuji which include The Great Wave off Kanagawa which was a woodblock print, as well as all the beautiful beach and seaside landscape paintings, as well as marine life work. The lists are endless and your options and many. It is relatively easy to identify artist, sculpturers, printmakers or crafts people to focus on and explore. I personally like to plan to include a range of very famous art and artists as well as lesser-known ones, and to explore a combination of local, national and international artist. It is also important to explore a range of artists and art styles through the ages. As well as tribal and cultural art. Styles, cultural, and historic art can be added at different times to explore different topics.

Supporting different areas of learning

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Art is a great way to explore all areas of development. It is so cross curricula and is something that can support the exploration of many different subjects and topics.

It can include:

Cognition and learning: including: thought processes, and processing, memory, reasoning, attention and awareness, exploration, control, sequence, pattern etc

Communication and Interaction - including: both receptively and expressively, responding and interacting

Social, Emotional and Mental Health - including: working with others/collaboratively/awareness of others, expressing emotion, pride, mindfulness, relaxation

Sensory and/or Physical Health: including: body awareness, sensory development, fine motor development/coordination and movement, reaching, grasping, releasing, manipulating, gross motor movements, tactile discrimination etc

If we refer to the national curriculum for art and design for KS1&2 the aims are ensure that all pupils:

- ♣ produce creative work, exploring their ideas and recording their experiences
- ♣ become proficient in drawing, painting, sculpture and other art, craft and design techniques
- ♣ evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design
- ♣ know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239018/PRIMARY_national_curriculum_-_Art_and_design.pdf

I know that we are working at a non-subject specific level, although I always ensure I refer to the subject specific guidance. As it is our role to ensure we offer our learners opportunities to build their skills and express themselves through art.

To build art into my long-term planning, I identify all the areas that I want or need to cover across the timeframe. I then build my list of topics to focus on over the period. Once I have this, I will look at how the different areas of art will link to my topics – ensuring that over the period of time I have a good mix and offer opportunities to explore techniques, as well as build on previous skills enabling the learners to express themselves through their use of art.

Different areas of art

Let's have a look at some of these things:

- Drawing and painting (I have put these together as they cover similar elements and use similar skills) – you can use different mediums and tools to create images, forms or shapes. These can be done on a variety of surfaces such as papers, cards, canvas, wood, ceramic, plaster or other materials.
- Drawing and painting include things like – composition and relationships of objects, light and shadow, edges, size/proportions, style, space, colour, tone -and can be realistic, symbolic or expressive. They can be done in different mediums such as charcoal, paint, ink, pastels, chalk, markers, crayons, pigment. With the use of different items and tools – including hands, feet, body parts, brushes (a wide range of these), rollers, palettes, spatulas, sponges, spoons, forks, natural items like leaves, straw, twigs etc

- For our learners we may explore these in different ways. For instance, exploring these mediums – using our hands, finger feet. Moving hands through flour/coloured rice/shaving foam/paint/paint with flour or rice or seeds in to add texture – add glitter and use a torch to add that visual element to draw visual attention to help build hand eye coordination. Covering hands or feet in charcoal/chalk/pastel/paint and allowing the learner to place their hand or foot on the surface of the paper or card or move across it will create definite marks and shapes or pushing balls through paint and across paper – turning a fan on with a switch to blow paint covered balls or balloons across paper. Or placing items under paper for the learner to feel through thin paper - again with colour on their hands or feet to highlight the shape or object on the paper. You could add a choice of medium and or colour for the learner. They may not yet be at the point of understanding their choice but giving the opportunity to indicate one from two will build in and help the understanding of the routine of making a choice. Using language appropriate for your learner – clear and concise – working on colour recognition as well. If your learner uses real object or photos or symbols then ensure you support these choices with communication appropriate to them, also be consistent with the language you use and in the way you offer experiences and choices.
- Think carefully about the best way to support and encourage your learners movements - what is the best position for them to be in? supported in their chair, prone on a wedge, or in a standing frame. Do they need support under their arm or elbow to allow for independent movements – what stabilisation do they need? We want to encourage and facilitate as much independent movements as possible. Consider the grasping or gripping of items, how can you support this, I have used a range of adaptations and different grips, including attaching laces or Velcro straps that will swing or exaggerate movements. May be hanging a mark making item on something that could be knocked to allow it to swing over the surface to be drawn on. Think about how your learner can create movement then how you can adapt the environment to allow them to create that mark. Do they need any surface raised or angled – what works best for them.
- If you are looking at still life drawings and particular art - I would recommend choosing drawings or paintings of items that you can replicate in reality – for instance like looking at Paul Cezanne's the Basket of apples this is something you could recreate with a basket, some apples and white cloth and a bottle – the learners could feel the real items and explore their relationship physically – consider placing some of the items on their tray for them to feel them to move and position and in doing so they will be creating a composition – you could photo graph the results and view them with or display with Cezanne's. You could explore the items – make some fruit prints – allowing the learners to feel the cut fruit in the paint, if you place the fruit with the paint on to the paper and allow them to explore, they will be creating marks and their own version of their composition. Encourage repetitive movements, like patting or grasping or pushing and pulling or to use the movements they have, maybe stretching or reaching for items to build on those functional movements.
- Sculpture - inc clay, kinetic, papier mache model making– sculpture is a lovely one to work with as there is some many options to explore. From the materials used to the textures, shapes, sizes, weights, movement, colour, shadow and light, angles etc
- In its most basic form, you could work in squashing and squelching clay or papier mache – to create abstract shapes. There are some lovely experiences to explore though the work of Barbara Hepworth or Henry Moore. The shapes are so fluid and textures so smooth and cool or warm – stone cool and wood warm – to feel smooth stones or smooth wood with the weight of them in the hand/on the body – many of their sculpture are based on the human form so using lycra draped over their or your limbs for them to feel and explore our shapes in a more abstract way. Photographing this work really well. Sharing and making a joint shape is a lovely way to build awareness of others as well. You can also develop shapes through pressing or rolling clay shapes. Who every they are able to change the shape

of a ball of clay will be an excellent example of sculpture. Using lovely skills like push and pull, press, grasp etc

- Something I have also worked on with in the Topic of 'All about me; is creating a sculpture self -portrait which includes photography and collage.
- Initially we find out about me – exploring all the things they like – photographing the learners exploring these things, also a few things they are not so keen on. Then sharing things with their favourite people – gathering photos of these people or textures that represent them, or the events, small objects that could represent them or the activities. There is opportunity to encourage the learners to take photos of their favourite people or items– taking a couple of shots and choosing which to keep,
- Once all the information is collated, we drew around the learners – we did this by feeling the shape of their body first and identifying their body parts and we gently but firmly moved our hand around them, we then repeated this to draw around them – so we were also working on our body awareness and our body mapping. We did this twice, so we had two card board figures – for each side the learner was then supported to add the collected items and images. One side for things I love – this side is full, one side for things I don't like (can you see the gaps), one side for people I love and are important to me and the final side is texture and colours I like. We added body perfume spray that the individuals used to create that added sensory element – oh this smells of me. When adding these things, the learner is encouraged to feel explore, choose, drop the items in place, pat them down, maybe grasp the glue stick of glue roller or you could use double sided tape that way wherever they place drop or roll something to is where it sticks. Once these were complete, we were able to cut them and slot them together to create a sculpture self-portrait – this can also be done linked to collage or if you are looking at Anthony Gormley creating life size sculptures
- Printing – is a great experience in many ways and can be accessed easily. There are some gorgeous visual patterns and contrasting prints as well as amazing carved wood or block prints. For this I may link to fabric printing or creating repeated patterns or copies of images. There are some great experiences with printing from natural items – such as fruit, veg, leaves – where there is an added smell and texture. As well as toys or sensory items – dipping them in paint and printing on the paper, having two shapes and two colours – great choice making and pattern creating opportunities. You can lift textures from the environment using rubbing which is a form of printing. Using press printing is lovely, choosing textured items to press into the press print – rolling ink over and printing from them – this can then be repeated with different texture and a different colour and this can be reprinted over the top to create a design. Its an amazing way to explore cause and effect, creating mark on items. To create a or decorate t-shirts or bags are lovely end products – if you create some practice sheets – as the design process exploring a range of options and choosing or refining the end design. Tape a frame around the area to decorate and encourage the learner to repeat the process.
- Collage – is a wonderful thing to explore as well especially tactile collage, there are some lovely ideas for natural collages that have loads of textures and colours, as well as using collected images to create different type of images – creating a warm or cold collage is a lovely way to explore colours and emotions – gathering and sorting the colours needed to create your images, you could go on a treasure hunt to gather your materials – matching and sorting, identifying colours.
- David Hockney created some lovely collages that could be used as a starting point.
- Creating self-portraits using collage is lovely too – you could link this to photography and use photos of self and use mirrors to work on self-awareness – adding hats, wigs, glasses – how we look different, adding pre-cut items to large photos of them selves.

- Photography – there are some lovely examples of photography especially some of the national geographic images. Something that the learners could experience going outside and exploring the environment trees, leaves, light dark, shadows and take photos – you can set up an eye gaze to be able to take photos. The learners could take a few photos and make choices about which to keep and print to create a collage with or display in a class gallery, or it could be for specific things like creating a poster etc.
- Photos can also be cut and changed quite easily to create changes, using two photos and combining them – maybe repeating them and exploring pattern or even looking at pop art like Andy Warhol and repeating images using bold colours – print them in black and white then roller over with a colour wash to recreate some pop art
- Textiles – this can also be linked to printing – and the variety of textures that are available in textiles are amazing – heavy or smooth weaves are good contrasts to support development of tactile discrimination, lovely opportunities to explore language as well soft, smooth, rough, crinkly, stiff etc.
- Creating weaves are great too, you can get some great large weave items like netting or the orange work mens fencing, using strips of fabric so the learners can choose the fabric by feel or colour, some work on pushing and pulling as the fabric it woven through the netting. Or you can create simple open looms with card and string.

Stimulating the senses through art

When doing my planning I do like to look at how to incorporate stimuli for different senses into the activities – anyone who knows me will know that I like to look at the world with a ‘I see you see’ outlook – and by that I do not mean just seeing - I always think about how our learners may experience things – what they hear, feel, see, smell. Everything we do and all the experiences we offer will have multiple sensory offerings. Moving things make sounds, materials feel differently, weigh differently, have different temperatures, different smells and it is important to identify and emphasise or stimulate different senses when planning the work. Obviously, you will also be tailoring the work to include targets and strategies that are needed to support your individual learners.

There is an amazing book called Multisensory art flip flap fun – by Clare Hobson and edited by Flo Longhorn – I am not sure you can even buy it now, but it includes creative ideas that link to words and include – look, listen, touch, move, smell, and taste –

for instance,

Look –

Follow ... in the dark take a torch for a walk;

Peer.. into water through water, under water – are there creatures in the deep?

Peep .. through the key hole – I spy what?

Compare.. my foot, your foot, my foot, big foot, little foot print foot?

Search for the end of the rainbow - what will we find a palette of colours or a pot of gold

Listen –

Tear.. paper, card, newspaper, brown paper, tissues

Squirt... paint from the bottle – drip drop splat, splot – weeeeeeeee your painting me

Squelch.. goes the paint, squidging between my fingers and toes,

Shout ... wake up, paint bright and brash loud, loud loud

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Touch –

Gloopy... sieve, pour, toss corn flour – mix with water – and sprinkle powdered paint – make a mess), gritty – drag, claw, and draw your finger through dry sand and through wet sand poke dig bury something

Smooth...my hands with paint, rub and tickle your feet with paint stamp and print

Move –

Run...one finger through the paint, slide ten fingers around in the paint up and down and in and out, wiggle your toes in paint,

Slip.. and slide your painty feet along the floor carefully does it.

Smell –

Smell – wet fish – sniff scales, fins, tail, eyes, teeth – what no ears?

Do smells have colours, do colours have smells?

Lemon – yellow paint with a squirt of citrus anyone for orange or lime green

Taste –

Squash.. mix and taste berry paint, strawberry gooseberry blue berry raspberry

Do.. put your fingers in the jelly, draw in the jelly add jellybeans watch them shine

There are lots of different art and craft ideas available online simple searches will often take you down wonderful sensory explorative adventures.

Supporting individuals

I may have mentioned some of this earlier but there are some key things to consider when supporting your learners

- Communication styles – ensure that you are well prepared and have access to all the communication equipment that your learner requires – communication is something that runs through everything we do. Giving our learners consistent access to their preferred style of communication is paramount for them to become accomplished communicators and receivers of information. Make sure everyone is aware of this as well – if you need objects of reference the ensure they are available and easily accessible, consider the choices that will be on offer – what will be needed?
- Routine/predicable/repetitive/consistency – ensure that you create a routine around your art sessions having a clear beginning and end – always begin and end in the same way, this will help give the learner a structure to anticipate within. As well as safety and familiarity. Personally, I will always begin and end each session in the same way – the only change will be the object of reference, song or smell for the specific session. When presenting the individual activities – use consistent language, and repetitive action for them, like the grasping, patting, reaching etc – building expectations and predictability for them, to enable them to anticipate and easily understand the expectations. Don't be afraid to repeat sessions several times so the learners have the chance to become familiar with it
- Positioning/ Environment – ensure that the learner is in the best possible supported position – this could be prone or upright or even standing – what ever suits the learner best – you want them to be able to concentrate on the activities and not trying to support their bodies. Identify what you want from them – is it reaching for and exploring the stimuli the main aim – then look at the barriers to this

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and ensure they are in the best position and the items presented are presented in a way to allow for this to be worked on. Think also about the position within the room, distraction, light, etc – ensure they are in the best environment as possible

- Supported access – if you are supporting your learners – try to always use hand under hand so that the learner has the choice and build up over time confidence to independently explore. Think about maybe supporting their elbow or wrist underneath by propping them rather than physically holding this will give greater independence. Also think about using string or glue guns to edge images for those with visual impairments – I did this with some Henry Moore sculpture as we were unable to access them in life, so edges the shapes to feel as it was the form and the shape we were working on.
- Equipment – ensure you have a range of equipment that the learner is able to use with as much independence as possible – add thicker handles as needed, use rollers, think of the colours of items – do you need to use a black or contrasting background to highlight items – maybe coloured handles so the learner can see where to grasp, maybe use a spotlight torch to help guide the eye. Do you need to angle the surface? There is lots to consider

Links and suggested reading

Research and adaption of resources – There are lots of galleries both Local and national that are worth looking at their websites – they will often have suggested activities linked to the exhibitions on display – often the suggestions are aimed at a higher level than our learners but there is often something that can be used as a starting point and adapted – look at the suggestions – how do they stimulate the sense – how can you make them more sensory?

Pinterest – there are so many sensory art ideas if you do a simple search and you will be able to pull out items linked to your topic or focus

Twinkl resources – there are again lots of ideas and suggestions, there is also some art planning available to download which may give you good ideas, again you can often adapt them or add sensory elements

Flo Longhorn – Sensory Art for very special people – these books are free to download

PMLD link articles – there are also some good articles about art and access to art in the pmla link which I have included.

Art is such a wide subject and includes so much and so much can be explored through the senses. Creating environments of images – maybe transforming a corner of your room to a piece of famous art will immerse your learners within that art – Henri Matisse in his later years with his cut out colourful shapes are lovely and something that could be recreated, a lot of these are huge, and creating a wall of coloured shapes would be very striking for your learners. Or maybe Van Gogh and his starry night – using fabrics hanging and draping to create a dark space a hanging moon with silhouetted buildings against the wall. So the learners enter the painting. Or Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Harvesters – using straw and corn on the wall and having the bark of the tree to feel. With the use of straw, you will add a smell to the mix as well. The options are many.

I am very aware that I have only just hit the surface of this and have shared a lot of information with you, but I hope you will be able to take something away and be inspired to look at the art experiences you offer and see how you maybe able to expand on it and look for those different sensory elements to enhance. And

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remember art is subjective and it is an expression, and it is the expression of your learners, there is not right or wrong way to create it, every one has their own style.

Thank you for listening.

Reading and links:

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/planit-primary-teaching-resources/planit-art-primary-teaching-resources>

Art planning – check headings and what should be included

<https://sites.google.com/view/flolonghornsensorybooksfreedow/home> Flo Longhorn Art for very special learners

<https://sendat.academy/students/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2020/03/Creative-Development-Ideas.pdf>

ideas and good practice guide

<https://www.pmlmlink.org.uk/issue/arts-and-culture/> PMLD link to download

<https://www.choiceforum.org/docs/The-arts-and-people-with-profound-and-multiple-learning-disabilities.pdf>

the arts forum – the arts for PMLD

<https://www.accessart.org.uk/artist-led-for-send/> -

ARTIST-LED CREATIVE FACILITATION FOR SEND

<https://engage.org/resources/engaging-communities-remotely/the-multi-sensory-art-project/> - The Multi-Sensory **Art** Project (MSAP) is a collaboration

<https://cris.brighton.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/4785474/FinalThesis.pdf> - Thesis: **Meaningfully engaged? Exploring the participatory arts practices of adults with PMLD.** By Melaneia Warwick

<http://www.pmlmlink.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/PMLD-Link-Issue-27.pdf>

art for all in PMLD link – 1997

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf

SEND code of practice 2015