
Understanding The “How” A Narrative Inquiry Into The Experiences of Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills (Arts) Program Implementers in Fostering Readiness Among High School Students in Special Day Classes

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Abstract — This study centers on the stories of eight implementers — classroom teachers and paraprofessionals — whose lived experiences with the Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills (ARTS) Program in high school Special Day Class (SDC) settings serve as living proof that arts-based learning activities are a purposeful and effective pathway toward building transition skills among students with disabilities. The study is anchored in the ARTS Lens — a theoretical framework grounded in four interconnected principles: Active Learning, Readiness, Transformation, and Self-Expression — which guided both the design and interpretation of the inquiry, affirming that intentional arts engagement moves SDC learners meaningfully toward transition competence and independence. Through narrative inquiry methodology, implementers' stories were gathered via verbatim interviews, reflective dialogues, and classroom documentations, yielding 12 narrative titles that clustered into four thematic groups, each corresponding to one of the four constructs of the ARTS Framework: Ability, Resilience, Talent Nurtured, and Socio-Emotional Regulation. The ARTS Program deliberately integrates visual arts, performing arts, and culinary arts as core instructional tools, aligned with the CLASP Domains — Cognitive, Language, Adaptive, Social, and Physical — to holistically address the developmental needs of SDC learners. The narratives collectively reveal how arts-integrated routines significantly strengthened students' communication abilities, social-emotional development, academic

comprehension, social participation, and functional independence. From the implementers lived experiences, two outputs emerged: the ARTS Framework, which maps how arts-based routines support whole-child development and transition-focused instruction, and the ARTS Module, a practical collection of arts-integrated lessons and teaching strategies aligned with the framework ready for classroom use. Collectively, these products — rooted in the ARTS Lens of Active Learning, Readiness, Transformation, and Self-Expression — offer actionable, evidence-based resources for educators committed to advancing equitable and meaningful transition outcomes for SDC high school students.

Keywords: *ARTS Framework, ARTS Lens, ARTS Module, ARTS Program, art- based learning, CLASP domains, narrative inquiry, special day class, special education, transition readiness*

I. INTRODUCTION

Special Education, now officially referred to as Special Needs Education (SNED) under Republic Act No. 11650 (RA 11650), known as the "Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act," is anchored on the philosophy of providing equitable, inclusive, and individualized learning opportunities for children with disabilities (Barco, 2024). The law mandates schools to go beyond traditional academic instruction by ensuring that learners receive individualized support, life skills training, and targeted interventions to prepare them for independence and transition into real-life settings. In line with this, schools are encouraged to adopt meaningful and engaging programs that not only address instructional gaps but also promote holistic development across multiple domains (Ismail,2025).

One of the main goals of RA 11650 is to encourage independence. The law requires schools to develop and implement activities that help students with disabilities prepare to live independently and be part of the community. It calls for teaching students life and job skills, assistive technologies, and planned transition programs to help them become self-sufficient and active members of society (Capone, 2025).

On the other hand, The United States' Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is similar in many ways. IDEA guarantees the right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). It also makes sure that every student has an IEP and puts a lot of emphasis on preparation for the transition to adulthood. Both regulations ensure procedural protections, parental involvement, regular assessments, and access to multidisciplinary support teams. Both frameworks focus on holistic development, which includes academic success, social skills, mental health, and the ability to work independently. This is done through personalized support and inclusive approaches (Dragoo & Graber, 2024).

Recent studies confirm that inclusive educational approaches, such as those delineated in RA 11650 and IDEA, enhance academic performance, social integration, and self-esteem for students with disabilities. Evidence-based approaches that promote holistic development and independence include multisensory education, assistive technology, art-based strategies, and flexible assessment methods (Hornby & Kauffman, 2024). These results show how important it is to have coordinated, tailored, and community-driven support to help each learner reach their full potential.

Moreover, the researcher developed the Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills (ARTS) Program after observing that students in the Special Day Class (SDC) benefit from learning environments that are lively, joyful, and hands-on, rather than just pen-and-paper (Martin, 2022). Without a strict curriculum in SDCs, the researcher created this program to meet diverse learner needs. For her master's thesis, the researcher created a tool to support children with Down syndrome in visual arts, using pictures, sketching, and painting to help them learn and express themselves. However, for this paper, she expanded her approach to include a range of art forms, such as music, dance, acting, and crafts. This larger strategy helps address the varied needs of students, which lets them interact, participate, and grow in many different ways.

The ARTS program focuses on preparing students with special needs for independence, vocational readiness, and meaningful participation in society. Although the arts may be broadly categorized into multiple forms, this study intentionally centers on Visual Arts, Performing Arts, and Culinary Arts as its core domains. These three classifications were deliberately selected because they provide structured, hands-on opportunities to reinforce transition skills in real-life

contexts actively. Visual arts strengthen fine motor development, problem-solving, and self-expression. Performing arts enhance communication, social interaction, confidence, and emotional regulation. Culinary arts directly develop adaptive behavior, sequencing, responsibility, independence, and practical daily living and pre-vocational skills. goes beyond visual arts, giving students more opportunities to discover and develop their talents, build new skills, and meet new people. This change acknowledges that each child is different and may respond well to different kinds of art activities, not just visual ones. Because of this, the program now supports overall growth and makes learning fun by offering each kid a variety of creative activities tailored to their skills and interests.

This program is based on the CLASP (cognitive, language, adaptive, social and physical) domains and incorporated multiple forms of art. Visual arts include drawing, coloring, painting, and paper crafts. Performing arts involve dancing, singing, acting, and playing physical creative games. Culinary arts focus on cooking and preparing food. Through different forms of arts, it encourages creativity, self-expression, and active participation among students. Moreover, the word "clasp" means to hold tightly together, which shows how these five primary domains are connected. These areas are cognitive, language, adaptive, social, and physical skills. Each art activity works in one or more of these categories. It also develops students' academic and life skills by utilizing their natural talents in the arts. These skills are necessary for living on their own and working, and they help students get ready for life after school. The activities help students learn by having them communicate, solve problems, be independent, interact with others, and coordinate their bodies. In short, the program links the CLASP domains to help students with disabilities grow and stay motivated.

This study aims to examine how arts-based activities within the ARTS Program reinforce transition skills across the CLASP domains (Cognitive, Language, Adaptive, Social, Physical) for SDC high school students, to interpret how the ARTS program supports students' whole-child development, including confidence, self-expression, regulation, and participation in school and community life, and to explore how implementers describe their experiences in using the Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills (ARTS) Program to foster transition readiness among high school students in Special Day Classes. Furthermore, the study's results will help the researcher develop a more structured arts program, especially for high school students with special needs.

She wants to develop best practices and encourage greater use of the arts in teaching by analyzing the results of her ARTS program. To engage high school students in SDC, the researcher uses several art-based teaching strategies.

Theoretical Lens

The ARTS Lens—Applied Learning, Readiness, Transformation, and Self-Expression—provides a theoretical framework for developing transition skills in students with disabilities. Grounded in Dewey's experiential learning theory, it emphasizes learning through meaningful, hands-on experiences that connect to real-life contexts. This lens supports students' growth by fostering readiness, personal transformation, and opportunities for authentic self-expression.

The ARTS Lens is informed by the educational philosophy of John Dewey, who believed that students learn best through meaningful and real-world experiences rather than passive instruction (Eryaman, 2024). Drawing from Dewey's progressivism, the ARTS Lens provides a theoretical perspective for interpreting implementers' experiences and understanding how arts-integrated classroom routines support both learning and transition readiness. Dewey argued that education should be grounded in learners' concrete experiences and active problem solving. Consistent with this perspective, the program incorporates visual, performing, and culinary arts—such as painting, drawing, music, dance, drama, and cooking—as practical forms of "learning by doing," allowing students to practice skills through authentic tasks rather than only hearing about them in instruction (Clegham, 2025).

Similar to how a camera lens focuses light, the ARTS Lens focuses educational experiences through arts-based activities, particularly visual, performing, and culinary arts. Through these creative and hands-on experiences, students actively participate in meaningful learning tasks that strengthen engagement and skill development. Within these experiences, Transformation becomes visible as students gradually move from shyness and passivity toward active participation, creative risk-taking, and the sharing of their talents. These experiences strengthen students' confidence, identity, and sense of themselves as capable learners, reflecting Dewey's view of education as a continuous process of growth through meaningful experience (Main, 2023). At the same time, the

ARTS Lens encourages Self-Expression, allowing students to communicate their ideas, emotions, and identities through artistic activities such as drawing, music, performance, and movement.

The ARTS Lens also frames learning as holistic by connecting arts-based experiences to the CLASP domains—Cognitive, Language, Adaptive, Social, and Physical functioning (Smith & Lee, 2025). Arts activities are intentionally designed to support multiple domains simultaneously. For example, drama and storytelling strengthen language development and social communication; dance and movement enhance physical coordination and adaptive flexibility; and visual arts projects encourage cognitive skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. These integrative practices reflect Dewey's claim that art and experience play an important role in meaningful learning (Eryaman, 2024). By planning lessons in this way, teachers use students' existing interests and strengths—such as drawing, music, or movement—as applied tools to support areas of need such as communication, self-care, or motor coordination, reinforcing both Readiness and Transformation across the CLASP domains and supporting whole-child development (Garcia & Patel, 2025).

Within this framework, Readiness emphasizes how ARTS lessons intentionally develop transition skills, independence, and work habits needed beyond high school. This approach aligns with the transition literature, which highlights the importance of experiential and community-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities (Main, 2023). Activities such as cooking tasks, mock store role-plays, and school concession projects provide meaningful contexts where students practice managing money, following multi-step directions, cooperating with others, and functioning in community-like environments. These applied scenarios support post-school competence and align with evidence showing that work-like experiences and functional skill instruction improve adult outcomes for individuals with disabilities (Clegham, 2025).

In this way, the ARTS program operates as a strength-based, arts-integrated expression of Deweyan progressivism, aligning Applied Learning, Readiness, Transformation, and Self-Expression with students' abilities, interests, and transition goals. Through arts-based activities that engage the CLASP domains, the ARTS Lens offers a meaningful perspective on how creative learning experiences support holistic development and transition readiness for students in Special Day Classes (Main, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

This narrative study examined teachers' stories about implementing the structured ARTS program in SDC classrooms, grounded in the research context of creating and using this structured ARTS design. These implementation narratives were gathered through interviews that focused on teachers' lived experiences with the program. Building from this context, the following Statement of the Problem was answered:

1. How do the implementers describe their experiences in implementing the Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills (ARTS) program to foster readiness among high school students in Special Day Classes?
2. What core narratives emerged from the significant stories of the implementers?
3. What creative insights are drawn from the core narratives of the implementers?
4. What can be proposed based on the significant stories of the implementers?

II. METHODOLOGY

The perspective of the implementers on arts-based solutions were investigated in the study. A narrative study design was chosen because it enables a thorough, comprehensive knowledge of teachers' and paraprofessionals' life experiences, attitudes, and professional practices. She decided to investigate their perspectives on arts-based activities. The complexity and conceptual changes that occur as teachers apply arts-based practices in special education settings are particularly well represented in narrative research. This design offers comprehensive, contextual insights that go beyond basic observations by gathering and examining reflective reflections, personal narratives, and detailed descriptions of classroom and school experiences. From the perspectives of implementers directly involved in arts integration, this approach allows the researcher to spot trends, difficulties, and achievements, demonstrating how their viewpoints change over time and in response to actual situations. In the end, the narrative approach was chosen because it respects the opinions of leaders and educators, reveals the significance of their choices and actions, and

produces useful information that may guide and enhance arts-based solutions for students with special needs. (Bentley et.al., 2021)

Data Generation and Selection of Implementers

This study used multiple data sources to provide a comprehensive picture of how the ARTS program has affected students in the Special Day Class (SDC). The people who helped with this research were two (2) SDC special education teachers and six (6) paraprofessionals who worked directly with students during the art activities. The researcher chose these people carefully because they have been involved with the ARTS program from the beginning and have closely watched, recorded, and supported the students' participation, engagement, and growth throughout the program. Because they were involved so often, their thoughts are both credible and reliable. They have a great deal of deep knowledge from firsthand experience observing and interacting with students. Also, since the researcher is an implementer in this study, their insider perspective helped expand knowledge by allowing them to consider and contextualize the results. These implementers all have different perspectives on the program's impact, which makes the study's results more reliable.

The way this qualitative study collected and analyzed data was carefully planned to show the rich, complex experiences of people in the ARTS program and how arts integration helps students with special needs learn and become active. In the first step of the procedure, the researcher conducted interviews with key program participants, including teachers and paraprofessionals. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes on purpose. This gave the implementers enough time to reflect on their experiences and share detailed insights, while reducing the risk of fatigue that could affect the depth and authenticity of their answers. The researcher used high-quality audio recording technology to ensure the interview was clear and accurate. Before the discussions, participants were informed that recordings would be made and that their privacy would be protected. This created an open and trust environment that encourages honest communication.

The researcher wrote down the audio recordings verbatim after the interviews. This means that every word spoken, every pause, and every change in tone were recorded exactly. It is very important to maintain these small differences in voice because they add depth to the qualitative data by revealing the emotional tone and nuanced interpretations in participants' answers. Bilingual professionals who knew the cultural background and carefully translated transcripts of interviews that were not in English. This rigorous translation procedure ensures that idioms, emotional undertones, and subtle details are retained, preventing the meaning from being lost or altered and preserving the participants' voices.

After transcription and translation were completed, all qualitative data, including transcripts, audio files, and video recordings of student activities, were carefully categorized and securely stored. The researcher used specialist qualitative data management. This organized way of managing data makes sure that the research process is honest and can be traced back to its source.

Creating core narratives that describe participants' lived experiences in the ARTS program is a key aspect of the central analytic phase. These stories are made by putting together several types of data that show how students' cognitive, social, and adaptive skills are improving. This narrative synthesis does more than add data points; it makes the research more human by linking participant voices with observed behaviors and documented outcomes. The stories show how students interact with the program, express themselves creatively, deal with problems, and make social and academic progress in the arts-infused learning environment. The researcher is nonetheless careful to remain true to the participants' points of view while determining the meanings within the program's larger context.

The study used member checking to enhance the reliability of the results. Participants may be able to see draft core narratives and confirm, explain, or add to the researcher's views. This process of checking and rechecking builds trust and made sure that the final stories are true to how the participants see their experiences.

The last step in this qualitative research is to produce a comprehensive result. The researcher combined integrative narratives with visual and qualitative data to create a detailed module, a useful framework, or a set of well-supported suggestions. These outputs were meant to

show how the ARTS program has changed things straightforwardly. This final report of the study is based on real-world information and gives a very humanized picture of the experiences of both students and teachers who were part of the program. The goal is to provide practical advice that will help the arts be used more effectively in special education settings in the future. The proposed module and framework are also presented as a model derived from the study. It has a cyclical approach that makes it easy to keep improving and changing the module. This model is meant to fit right in with the curriculum and classroom materials, using various art forms to engage students and help them learn more.

This qualitative study ensured that the inquiry was respectful, thorough, and believable by following five carefully planned steps: intentional interviews, accurate transcription and translation, careful data management, story development, and participant validation. The method highlights the complex and important ways that integrating the arts into learning, engagement, and personal growth benefits students with special needs, which is the main goal of the study: to show these experiences in all their depth and complexity.

Literature Comparison

Many studies show that incorporating the arts into classrooms—such as painting, music, theater, and visual arts—brings significant benefits to students with disabilities. Research consistently shows that students with special needs engaged in creative activities become more motivated, interested in learning, and perform better overall. Through the arts, these students express themselves, calm their emotions, and develop vital skills like communication, teamwork, and creative thinking. For example, participation in painting or music often improves students' self-esteem, social skills, and pride in their abilities (Wood, 2021; Harvey & Loesl, 2021).

However, despite these positive effects, studies highlight that effective arts education for students with disabilities requires adaptations in teaching. Teachers need to modify lessons—slowing pace, changing materials, and offering alternative ways for students to demonstrate knowledge—so that all learners can participate. Collaboration between special education teachers

and paraprofessionals is essential, as is ongoing training to equip teachers with confidence and skills for inclusive arts instruction (Varthana, 2023; Gross, 2020).

The literature also points out that arts participation helps students develop self-confidence and a sense of belonging. Students engaged in arts-related activities better regulate their emotions, feel more welcomed, and perceive themselves as capable and creative individuals rather than being defined by their disabilities. This boosts their classroom engagement and social inclusion (Varthana, 2023; Cloonan et al., 2019).

Finally, although there is a growing body of evidence on the benefits of arts integration, the literature identifies gaps in understanding how to best implement and sustain arts programs in the long term. Input from all stakeholders—teachers, and paraprofessionals—is vital to designing arts programs that truly meet the needs of all students and remain effective over time (Arnold, 2022; Glass et al., 2021).

These revealed a clear consensus regarding the positive impacts of arts education in special education settings, balanced by critical challenges related to teacher preparedness and program sustainability. These insights highlighted the importance of continued research and professional development to optimize arts integration for students with disabilities.

This critical analysis provided a foundation for examining the current research topic, contextualizing it within existing knowledge while identifying key areas for further inquiry and improvement (Wood, 2021; Varthana, 2023; Harvey & Loesl, 2021; Gross, 2020; Cloonan et al., 2019).

Summary of Findings

1. The ARTS Framework was developed from implementers' lived experiences using the program to build transition readiness for high school students in Special Day Classes. They do not see ARTS as “extra” recreation, but as structured arts-integrated routines—through music, drama, movement, crafts, games, cooking, and role-play—that help students move from shyness and passivity toward active participation, risk-taking, visible talents, and a

stronger sense of belonging in class and in the wider school community. Implementers observe that ARTS opens multiple pathways for communication and self-expression, especially for students with limited or emerging language, by using journals, read-aloud, anti-bullying art, storytelling, role-play, sharing circles, and collaborative arts tasks to practice social skills, teamwork, responsibility, and emotional regulation in everyday routines. They also experience arts-integrated activities as deepening math and literacy while directly teaching real-life skills: money games, store role-plays, concessions, scripts, and journaling make academics functional, and cooking, self-care, classroom jobs, and community performances foster independence, work habits, motor skills, and self-advocacy that support post-school transition. At the same time, implementers acknowledge that this work is constrained by large classes, diverse needs, noise, limited time and space, and challenges in fully including nonverbal or more complex learners, so ARTS is viewed as both a powerful, resource-sensitive approach to inclusion and transition and as a call for stronger structural and system-level support to sustain its impact over the years.

2. The findings for SOP 2 reveal four interrelated core narratives that together portray purposeful arts integration as a transformative, readiness-building framework for SDC students. First, arts-rich routines turn classrooms into active, engaging spaces where students move from passivity to confident participation through music, movement, role-play, visual arts, games, cooking, and simulations, positioning the arts as a central pathway—not an add-on—for accessing curriculum with their whole bodies and emotions. Second, arts-integrated activities, especially in math and functional skills, make abstract concepts concrete and meaningful (e.g., store role-plays, concession stands, community shopping), which reduces anxiety, deepens understanding, and shifts students from “I don’t get it” to confident problem-solvers who help peers and want to repeat the tasks. Third, the narratives show that arts experiences create multiple avenues for communication, self-regulation, social belonging, and physical growth: storytelling, drawing, music, games, and structured routines help students express feelings, follow expectations, manage behavior, and build fine and gross motor skills while feeling equal and “part of the group.” Finally, the stories converge on readiness, independence, and identity, illustrating how practicing real-life roles (cooks, cashiers, performers, teammates) through arts-rich routines enables students to handle

money, follow multi-step directions, work in community settings, and take responsibility—supporting a shift in how they see themselves and signaling that purposeful arts integration weaves academic, social, emotional, physical, and transition skills into meaningful experiences that prepare them to thrive beyond the classroom.

3. The core stories of the eight implementers give rise to several creative ideas about how the arts can reshape students' identities, relationships, behavior, and learning in SDC settings. Across narratives, the arts are shown to turn ordinary classroom moments into turning points for confidence and self-concept, as students move from being seen as “struggling learners” to being recognized as dancers, singers, cashiers, actors, leaders, and helpers. Arts-based activities (songs, role-plays, simulations, games, cooking, mask-making, caroling) become safe spaces for students to practice moral imagination, empathy, advocacy, communication, and emotional expression, while also calming dysregulation by giving meaningful roles and predictable, enjoyable routines. The stories suggest that arts function as gentle, relationship-based discipline and as a flexible inclusion framework: teachers can use partial participation, favorite media, and differentiated roles so every student has an entry point and can experience success and “earned” recognition. Eventually, these practices generate “identity capital” and a sense of belonging, reduce behavior problems, and transform how both students and adults understand who SDC learners are and what they can contribute, making arts not an “extra” but a central, adaptable medium for holistic growth in cognitive, language, adaptive, social, and physical domains.
4. The results for SOP 4 indicate that the eight implementers' stories led to a proposed ARTS Framework that both redefines the uses of “arts” and offers a clear representation of how arts support SDC students. In the study, “ARTS” first names the program itself (Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills), second refers to concrete activities (visual, performing, and culinary arts used as hands-on transition practice), third serves as a four-part framework (Ability, Resilience, Talent nurtured, Socio-emotional regulation), and fourth functions as the active bridge that connects arts routines to the CLASP domains (cognitive, language, adaptive, social, physical). These uses are visually organized in the proposed ARTS Quadrant Framework—a square with four equal quadrants (A, R, T, S), each linked to three core narratives—that represents students as whole learners whose abilities, resilience,

talents, and socio-emotional regulation grow together through arts-integrated routines. Alongside this structural model, the study also advances an ARTS Lens—Applied learning, Readiness, Transformation, and social participation—as a Deweyan, progressivist way of interpreting implementers’ stories and understanding how arts-integrated routines function as experiential learning for transition. Taken together, the ARTS Framework and ARTS Lens summarize how purposeful arts integration becomes a central, structured pathway for SDC students’ academic, functional, social-emotional, and transition readiness, while giving teachers a practical, shared guide for planning, assessing, interpreting, and talking about student growth.

III. CONCLUSION

The findings support a clear, main conclusion: the Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills (ARTS) program, as captured in the ARTS Framework, is an effective, whole-child, transition-focused approach for high school SDC students. It is not just for fun or only used when there is extra time.

Based on the narratives of the implementers, the following conclusions were:

1. Through the ARTS program, these findings suggest that structured, arts-integrated routines offer a powerful yet resource-sensitive way to build transition readiness for SDC students by simultaneously strengthening their communication, social-emotional skills, academic understanding, and real-life independence. At the same time, the constraints identified by implementers highlight that maximizing the impact of this framework will require sustained structural and system-level support so that arts-based practices can be equitably implemented and maintained across diverse special education settings.
2. Through the utilization of various forms of arts, the findings for SOP 2 show that purposeful arts integration becomes a transformative, readiness-building framework for SDC students. It turns classrooms into active spaces where

students move from passive to confident participation; makes abstract academic and functional skills concrete and less anxiety-provoking; opens multiple pathways for communication, self-regulation, belonging, and motor development; and, ultimately, helps students practice real-life roles and responsibilities so they begin to see themselves as capable, independent contributors both in school and beyond.

3. These findings indicate that, through the ARTS program, arts-based routines in SDC settings do more than enrich lessons; they actively rewrite how students see themselves and how others see them, shifting identities from “struggling learners” to valued contributors such as performers, leaders, and helpers. By functioning as gentle, relationship-based discipline and a flexible framework for inclusion, the arts provide every student with an accessible entry point, meaningful roles, and authentic recognition, which together build identity capital, a sense of belonging, and holistic growth across cognitive, language, adaptive, social, and physical domains.
4. The findings for SOP 4 show that the eight implementers’ stories led to a proposed ARTS Framework in which ARTS stands for Ability, Resilience, Talent nurtured, and Socio-emotional regulation. In this study, “ARTS” names the transition program (Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills), describes the concrete arts activities used (visual, performing, and culinary arts), and defines four key developmental dimensions that link arts-integrated routines to the CLASP domains (cognitive, language, adaptive, social, and physical). Taken together, the ARTS Quadrant Framework highlights that ARTS is both an acronym and a guiding principle for using the arts as a central, structured pathway for SDC students’ academic, functional, social-emotional, and transition readiness, while giving teachers a practical shared guide for planning and explaining student growth. In parallel, an ARTS Lens—Applied learning, Readiness, Transformation, and Social participation—provides a Deweyan, progressivist theoretical lens for interpreting these stories, clarifying how arts-integrated routines function as experiential learning that builds independence,

reshapes identity, and deepens students' participation in classroom and community life.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some suggestions for using the Active Reinforcement of Transition Skills (ARTS) program to strengthen both teaching and learning in K–12 settings, particularly in Special Day Classes. These recommendations are drawn from the implementers' experiences and are intended to guide schools in making arts-integrated routines a structured pathway for building students' academic skills, independence, and social-emotional growth, while also supporting teachers in planning, implementing, and sustaining effective ARTS-based practices.

1. Teachers (SDC and general education) and classroom staff. They may Provide positive reinforcement (specific praise, certificates, small rewards, “ARTS Star of the Week”) to keep SDC students motivated and engaged in arts-based activities, and celebrate growth in arts and transition skills. Moreover, they may use the ARTS program as a daily tool by embedding arts into lessons (role-plays, drawing, music, performances, cooking or life-skills projects) to support learning and behavior. Furthermore, may they offer students choices and allow them to work at their own pace in different art activities, helping them find what they enjoy and can do well while building confidence. They may consider giving gentle, constructive feedback that starts with what students did well and adds one clear suggestion for improvement. In addition, may they connect arts tasks to transition goals (recipes, measuring, money, following directions) and document progress in IEPs or transition plans. They may visit arts spaces (shows, galleries, museums, concerts, plays) with clear support to connect ARTS activities at school with the wider world. Lastly, they may encourage participation in social, arts-based activities where students can practice language and social skills with peers.
2. Families and caregivers. They may use ARTS activities at home (singing through routines, drawing steps, acting them out) to boost confidence and make practice playful. They may give students chances to try different arts at home and support them with praise and calm

guidance, focusing on effort and persistence rather than perfection. Moreover, may they practice daily independent skills (dressing, snacks, organizing) using visual, performing, or culinary arts as supports and motivators. They may also look for community arts classes, workshops, or seminars designed for individuals with special needs and check that they offer support and modifications. In addition, they may visit art shows, galleries, museums, concerts, and plays with supports like visual schedules, headphones, and breaks. In addition, they may encourage students to join social, arts-based programs (choirs, theater, clubs) to practice communication, teamwork, and build friendships.

3. Community partners (community centers, arts organizations, churches, libraries). They may offer and adapt arts classes, workshops, or seminars for individuals with special needs, providing assistance, modifications, and caregiver participation. They may consider partnering with schools and families to make arts events accessible and welcoming for students with disabilities. In addition, they may provide inclusive arts-based social activities (choirs, theater, clubs, recreation) where students can interact with peers and practice social skills.
4. School leaders (principals, SPED coordinators, program implementers). They may promote educational settings that provide structured, creative support for students with disabilities by formally adopting ARTS in transition programs, writing it into school plans, and explaining its purpose to staff and families. They may consider integrating ARTS into existing transition and SEL programs so art time becomes core learning (scheduling ARTS blocks, linking to IEP/transition goals, using performances and simulations as formal learning). In addition, they may allocate time, space, and basic materials so that ARTS lessons are feasible and sustainable (shared arts/life-skills area, budget for supplies, access to safe cooking and performance equipment). Furthermore, they may include ARTS goals and language (Ability, Resilience, Talent, Socio-emotional regulation) in school improvement plans and monitor how ARTS contributes to attendance, behavior, and engagement. They may also consider promoting collaboration across general and SDC programs through shared arts projects, performances, or exhibits (mixed-group performances, joint art shows, school-wide ARTS days).

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5. District leaders and curriculum planners. May they consider promoting ARTS as a whole-child, transition-focused framework woven into K–12 curriculum in both general and special education. May they consider embedding ARTS principles in professional development so staff learn to use arts for SEL, behavior support, and transition skills (model lessons, co-teaching, coaching, resource sharing). Moreover, may they support and sponsor school-wide and inter-school ARTS events that bring together general education and SDC programs to reduce stigma and increase inclusion.

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