



Support Children First

Artist Within

Discovering Me

Meet Our Team

The Jefferson Award

Art by Aaron

Art by Alborz

Art by Connor

Art by Jasmine

Art by Wyatt

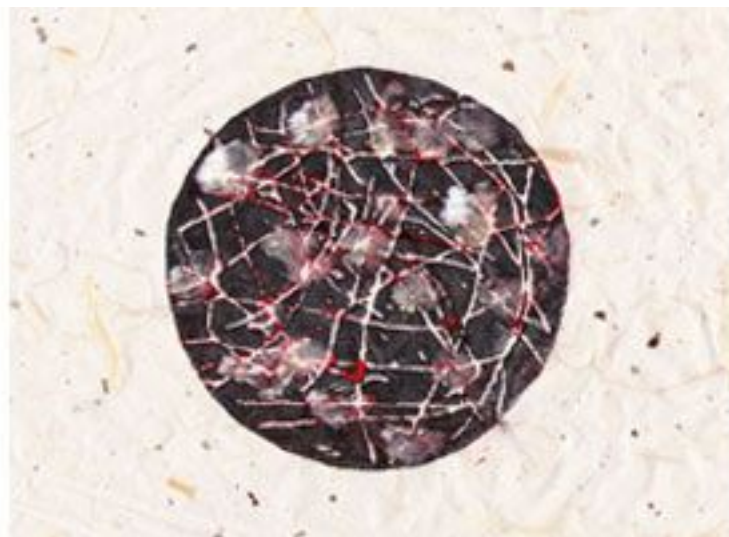
Great Story Ideas

About Wings

Wings Learning Center
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Welcome to the Spring 2005 edition of Wings Advisory! Our theme for this issue is “Wings Creative Spirit.” In this issue, we are proud to feature the beautiful artwork of our talented students. On behalf of Wings Learning Center, we deeply appreciate your continued support!

—Irma Velasquez, Executive Director



Acrylic Print on handmade paper
by Aaron

“Meeting the Artist Within”

by Linda Lange

(This article was adapted from an interview with Vicki Bynum, Special Education Teacher. Vicki holds an undergraduate degree in Studio Art and is currently pursuing a master's degree in Art Therapy.)

“Through making art, children gain a new self worth because they are ‘special’ due to their creativity and talent.”

—Vicki Bynum

Many evaluate the success of an art object based on how representative the object is to real life. For children with autism, however, their work might appear more abstract. The process of an art project is about strengthening fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and following one or two-step directions. Wings' teacher Vicki Bynum emphasizes, *"The process is key—not the final product. To tap into each child's unique talent, you maximize strengths and modify according to individual limitations."*



*Watercolor & chalk pastel
by Alborz*

Tools of the Trade

"Part of the challenge has to do with learning about art materials, such as a paint brush, and how to use them to create."

Vicki shares some tips about materials from her teaching experience:

Quality materials are critical to art project success. Rather than construction paper, crayons, and tempera paint, Vicki introduces higher quality materials that adults enjoy using as well, such as oil and chalk pastels, acrylic paints, and quality paper.

Handmade papers often have a unique texture and colors. As an example, she uses watercolors and pastel paper. These materials result in a more robust art project with brighter, more vivid colors.

Using real canvas for painting increases the quality of

the art. Construction paper becomes wet and crumbly. Canvas or nicer paper really sets off the art. With higher quality materials, Vicki says, *“Parents can’t believe their child created this! They mat and frame the art.”*



*Pen & watercolor on handmade paper
by Connor*

The Creative Journey

When working on painting projects, for example, watercolors, the children are unfamiliar with the materials and do not know the end point. As a teacher, Vicki guides them in knowing when the painting is complete.

She asks them to choose the colors, mix the brush in the color, and place it on the paper. She is teaching them something about the creative process, from start to finish. She praises them all through the process.

For more advanced students, Vicki teaches them how to mix colors, such as primary and secondary colors. For some, it's about learning how to remain focused, on task, and engaged in an unfamiliar activity.

“We were struck by some of the kids’ interest in art. Some kids who might not have shown a previous interest can become engaged in the process!”

Vicki separates “crafts” from “arts”. For example, recently her class was studying about dinosaurs. The class created crafts projects related to dinosaurs. Recently they also made penguins out of paper plates. During these projects, students are developing fine

motor skills through the practice of cutting and pasting. In crafts, there are more directions to follow—more goals in mind.

Alternatively, art projects are more free form than crafts. Art projects are about whatever happens—it's about self-expression. Some students enjoy that freedom of choice.

Whether an art or crafts project, the experience gives students a taste of success in creating an object from scratch.

The children continually receive positive praise and verbal reinforcement.

They know there is something very different about the art—they get positive reinforcement and a sense of excitement and attention for their work.

Vicki states:

“Often in children with autism, their talent goes unnoticed for years. Often these children are very creative. The key is to find a way to tap into their unique talents—to play to their strengths. It's more about the process of creating art rather than the content.”



*Pen & watercolor on rice paper
by Jasmine*

“Discovering Me through Art”

“We hang the projects around the room and place their names on the work. When others come by, we give recognition to the student artists. They are

very proud of their work. They smile and giggle. It shows they recognize their accomplishment.”

Beatriz Kim, Occupational Therapist., Wings Learning Center

by Linda Lange

(This article was adapted from an interview with Beatriz Kim, Occupational Therapist, Wings Learning Center.)

As an Occupational Therapist, Beatriz Kim uses art in the classroom to help her students strengthen fine motor skills and express themselves non-verbally. Her role is to guide the process while allowing the children to work independently. They choose the colors and the medium, such as ink, crayons and pencils.

Art projects usually begin following sensory integration therapy. According to Beatriz, the students are more organized and ready to focus following therapy. Their muscles are more coordinated, and they can achieve better concentration in table activities such as art. They are ready to get in touch with their creativity and express their thoughts and feelings through colors, forms, shapes, and pictures of all kinds.

Some of the students act very intentionally, knowing exactly which forms to make and which colors to choose. They enjoy exploring different colors and using tools in creative ways, making a variety of forms on the paper. Often, they know when the project is complete.

“One of the main issues for these children is communication. They are less able to verbally express feelings such as anger, happiness, or sadness. When they are doing art, color is very therapeutic. The children express themselves through certain colors. Feelings of nervousness might be expressed in blues and greens. Happier moods might be reflected with the use of vibrant colors. This is especially true of the older students.”

For younger students, Beatriz uses more structured art projects, such as “self-portraits”. They touch their faces and interpret on paper.

“Wings students tend to be very visual. Since art is a visual medium, it gives the children great satisfaction in being able to express themselves, in taking a project from start to finish, and experiencing success. When you create this art

piece and gain recognition for it from others, it builds confidence.”



*Chalk & pastel on colored paper
by Wyatt*

“Support Children First”

To continue to educate more children at Wings, we have implemented a training program to educate professionals in the field of autism. The costs involved for this training is \$50,000 per year. Our goal is to raise these funds by July 1, 2005.

On behalf of the children, please consider a tax-deductible donation to Wings.

For further information, contact Irma Velasquez, Executive Director, at 650-342-8753.

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Meet Our Team

Wings Learning Center continues in its tradition of offering a high-qualified team of professionals who are experienced in the field of autism and very committed to making a significant difference in the lives of its students: For details about our staff visit our website. www.wingslearningcenter.org/who_1/team12.html



The Jefferson Award

In 1972, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, U.S. Senator Robert Taft, Jr. and Sam Beard founded the American Institute for Public Service, a 501c3 public foundation, to establish a Nobel Prize for public and community service - ***The Jefferson Awards***.

The Jefferson Awards are presented in five categories, on both the national and local levels. The categories were created by the Board to reflect the full range of service to America - from top elected officials to neighborhood volunteers. They range from “*Greatest Public Service by An Elected Official*” to “*Outstanding Public Service Benefiting Local Communities*.”

Our Wing’s Executive Director, Irma Velasquez, has been awarded “*The Jefferson Award*” for “*Outstanding Public Service Benefiting Local Communities*.” To learn more about *The Jefferson Award* visit www.aips.org. Both KPIX and the San Francisco Chronicle will be featuring Irma’s story. The dates will be announced within the next few weeks.

Contact us with your Story Idea

Wings Learning Center’s quarterly e-newsletter promotes information sharing among parents and professionals. If you want to contribute a story or article, or if you have a great idea for a story, please contact Mona Rose at 650-342-8753.



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