

# MAKING ROOM AT THE TABLE: A Needs Assessment of Arts Education for Special Needs Students in New York City Public Schools

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Introduction by Don Glass, *VSA arts*

The Center for Arts Education  
May 7, 2009  
New York City

# VSA arts: Outcomes and Evaluation

- **IMPROVE QUALITY:** Use evaluation to thoughtfully and systematically improve the quality and relevance of practice, programs, and resources.
- **BUILD CAPACITY:** Build capacity by making the evaluation process and products meaningful, useful, and shareable.
- **SHARE KNOWLEDGE:** Share effective practices that are backed by credible evidence.

# *VSA arts: Purpose of NYC Needs Assessment Support*

- To develop a set of evaluation tools and processes for our affiliate and programming networks.
- To inform decision-making about program needs for Special Needs students in New York City public schools.

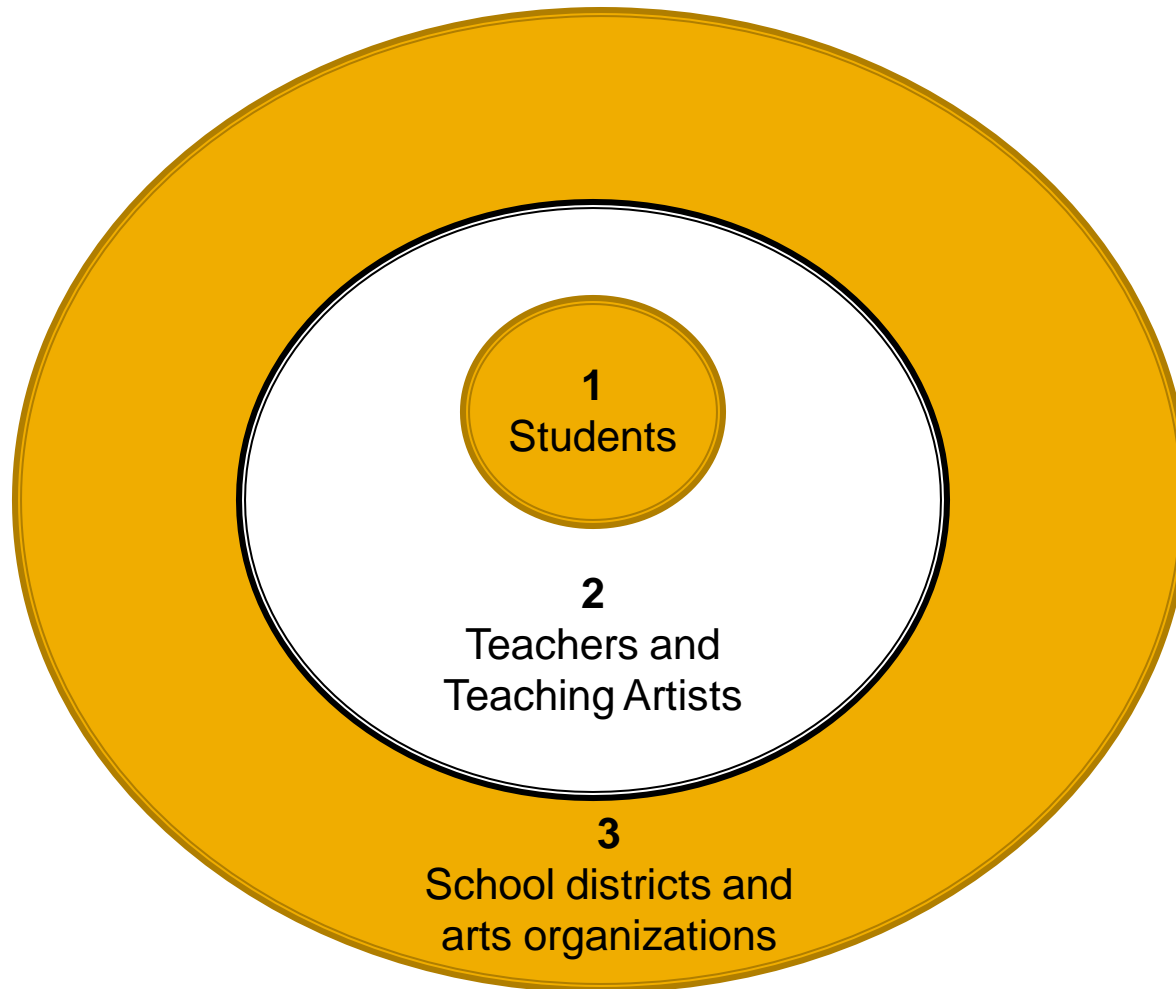
# Definitions

- A needs assessment represents the difference or discrepancy between two states- the current status and the desired status.
- A needs assessment is a systematic set of procedures for setting priorities and making decisions about program or organizational improvement and allocation of resources.

# Three Levels of Need and Target Groups

- Level 1: The direct recipients of services (students)
- Level 2: Those who deliver services to Level 1 (classroom teachers, arts specialists, teaching artists, etc.)
- Level 3: The inputs and resources that support Levels 1 and 2 (school districts and art organizations)

# Three Levels of Need and Target Groups



# Purpose

To ascertain primary obstacles to and opportunities for providing quality arts education to special needs students in New York City public schools, K-12.

# Primary Areas of Focus

- Value/s accorded the Arts in relation to special needs students, or lack thereof.
- Knowledge, Capacity, and Professional Development.
- Structure and Support.



# Data Was Collected Via Multiple Venues and from Multiple Sources

- Focus Groups were held with six primary stakeholder groups:
  - School Administrators (N = 9)
  - Art Organization Administrators (N = 9)
  - Arts Specialists (N = 10)
  - Classroom Teachers (N = 7)
  - Teaching Artists (N = 10)
  - Parents (N = 5)
- Online Surveys were administered:
  - Art Organization Administrators (N=37)
  - Teaching Artists (N=68)

# Data Was Collected via Multiple Venues and from Multiple Sources

- Interviews with 55 people were held across stakeholder groups as well as funders, consultants, and others.
- Observations were conducted of selected professional development venues – those provided teaching artists as well as those provided Arts specialists.
- Observations of selected special needs arts residency classes were conducted.

# Arts Values Cited For Special Needs Students

by Classroom Teachers, Arts Specialists, and School Administrators

## The Arts Increase

Communication

Engagement

Discovery

Focus

Time on task

## The Arts Develop

Self-confidence

Sense of self-worth

Sensory skills

Fine and gross motor skills

Social skills

Turn taking skills

Sense of community

## The Arts Can Increase

Intrinsic Motivation

Positive risk taking

Abstract thought and expression

Ability to synthesize and recognize connections

Attendance, especially in high school

# Arts Values Cited For Special Needs Students

by Classroom Teachers, Arts Specialists & School Administrators

## The Arts Also...

Provide access to the self.

Provide access to others.

Enable special needs students to explore the world through multiple modalities and work in multiple modalities.

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Enable special needs students to explore the world through multiple modalities and work in multiple modalities.

### **Classroom teacher:**

The arts are “one of the best tools for intrinsic motivation.”

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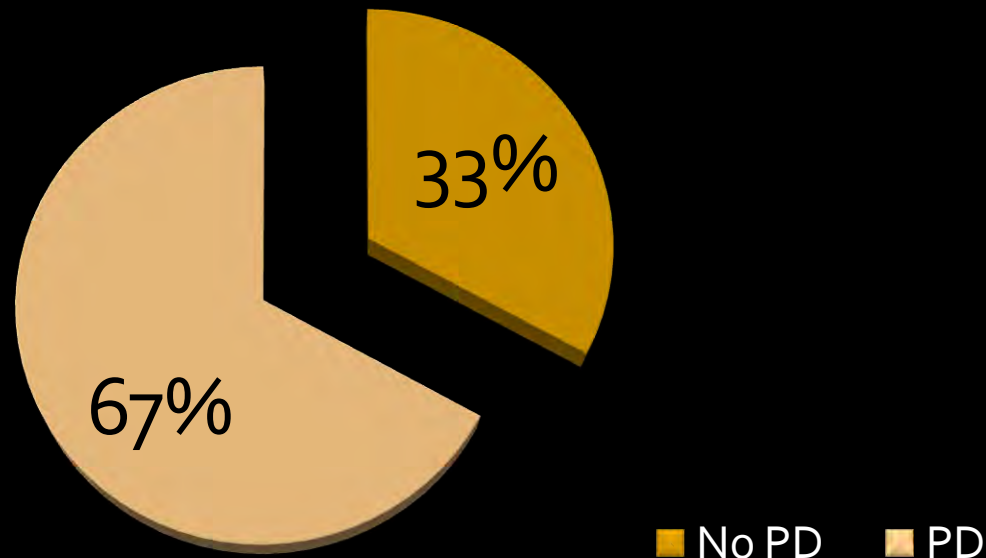
Provide access to others.

Enable special needs students to explore the world through multiple modalities and work in multiple modalities.

**Art Specialist:** The arts enable her special needs students to “explore their different learning modalities.”

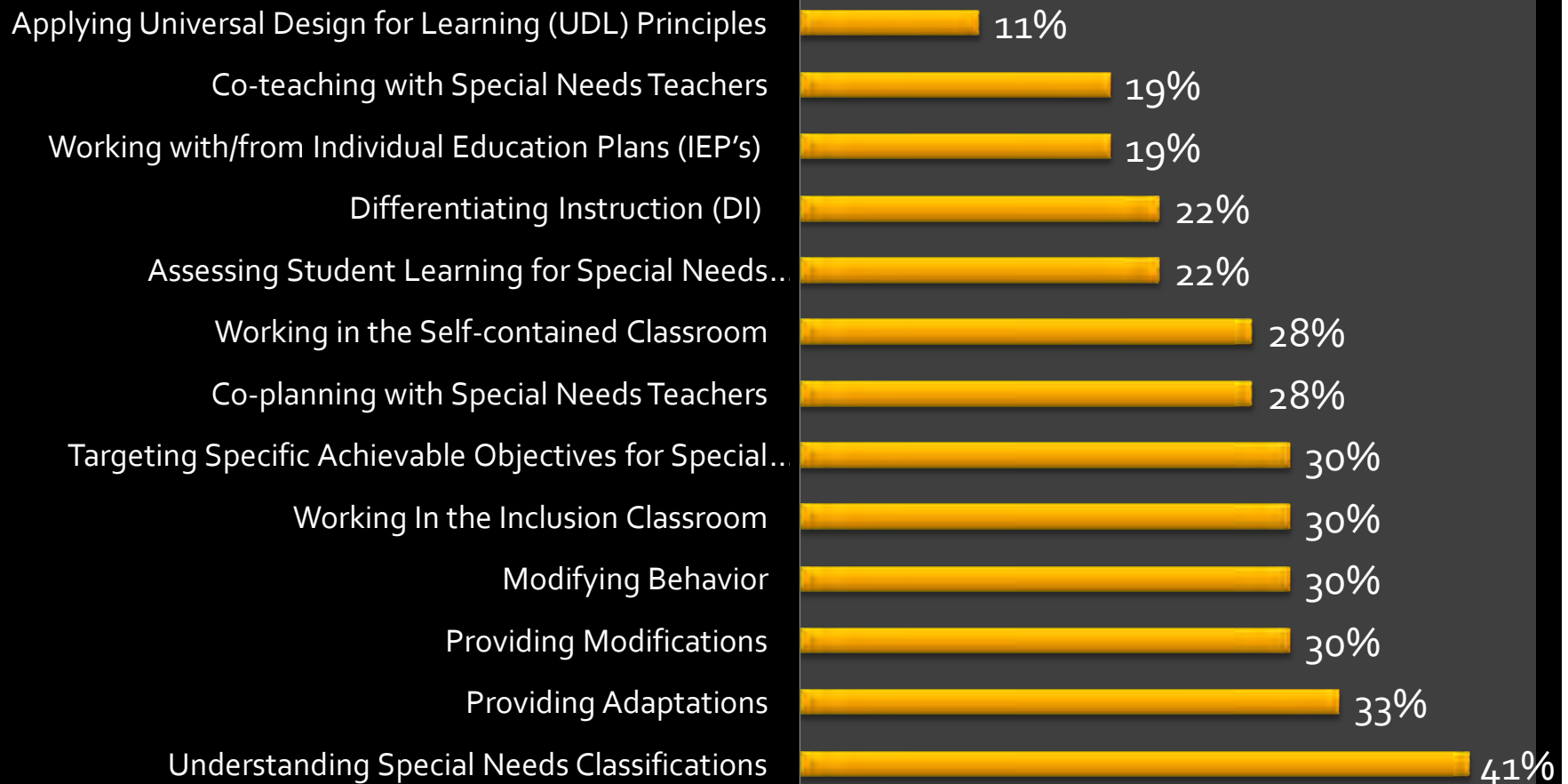
# Survey: Teaching Artist Professional Development

Percentage of Teaching Artists That Have Received Professional Development for Working with Special Needs Students (N=68)



# Survey: Teaching Artist Professional Development

## Professional Development Content (N=68)





## Survey: Recognizing the Need

78.6% of arts administrator survey respondents (N = 37) said their organizations offer teaching artist professional development for working with special needs students.

# Observations\*: Key Elements/Strong Practice in Teaching Artist Professional Development

- Long-term.
- Involved the same participants and the same core trainers.
- Included guest presenters who provided important information, knowledge, expertise and/or perspective...

\* Teaching Artist Training Institute (The Center for Arts Education, Marquis Studios, PS 37R) | Special Education Artist Academy (Arts Horizons)

# Observations\*: Key Elements/Strong Practice in Teaching Artist Professional Development

- Focused on one, specific disability.
- Contained a *real world* component.
- Mentoring, de-brief and reflection was ongoing and built into the process.

\* Teaching Artist Training Institute (The Center for Arts Education, Marquis Studios, PS 37R) | Special Education Artist Academy (Arts Horizons)

# Observations\*: Key Elements/Strong Practice in Arts Specialist Professional Development

- Long-term.
- Involved the same core trainers and, virtually, the same participants.
- Content-rich and participant-centered.
- Structure promoted professionalism.

\* District 75

# Arts Specialist-cited Professional Development Needs Areas

- Adaptive lesson and unit planning, especially in CTT settings.
- Additional training in how to adapt the NYC Blueprints to special needs.
- Assistive technology – both in terms of what is available and how to use it...

# Arts Specialist-cited Professional Development Needs Areas

- Documentation/Evidence gathering and how to best use it to teach others – especially classroom teachers, administrators and parents – the value of their work/the Arts.
- Disability-specific alternative assessment in and through the Arts.
- More training regarding specific classifications.

# Classroom Teacher-cited Professional Development Needs Areas

- Disability classifications
- Disability-specific instructional approaches.
- How to assess in and through the Arts.
- Unit planning.
- How to better work with paraprofessionals.

## District 75 School Administrator Recommendations to Deepen Capacity and Understanding Regarding Arts in Special Education

- Couple formal professional development sessions with in-class mentoring.
- Provide a District Arts Coach to help staff align with monthly school themes in and through the Arts.
- Increase Arts sharing between sites – staff and administrator inter-visitation as well as performances/exhibitions.



## District 75 School Administrator Recommendations to Deepen Capacity and Understanding Regarding Arts in Special Education

- Provide venues for Arts Specialists to present their work – within and across sites.
- Establish a forum for Arts Specialists to come together across sites on a regular basis to share perspectives and successful strategies.

# Teaching Artist-cited Professional Development Needs Areas (N = 68)

- Partnering with school-based practitioners.
- More professional development in general.
- Understanding special needs classifications.
- Targeting achievable objectives and planning/implementing appropriate curriculum.
- Differentiating instruction.

# Arts Residency Partnering

- 72.2% of Teaching Artist survey respondents said their classroom work was partnered.
- 36% of them found the level of that partnering satisfactory.

# Some Suggested Guidelines for Collaboratively Planning Special Needs Arts Residencies

(inclusion and self-contained settings)

- Pre-implementation planning meetings between teaching artist/s and all residency teachers.
- Simple TA checklists for pre-planning meetings.
- TA observation of residency classes before residency planning begins...

## Some Suggested Guidelines for Collaboratively Planning Special Needs Arts Residencies

- Mid- and post-implementation TA meetings with all participating teachers, sufficient, dedicated time allotted.
- As possible, paraprofessionals and support staff attend artist/teacher meetings.
- As possible, TA pre-residency class observations be followed by de-brief with classroom teacher/s.

# A Case for Collaborative Professional Learning Communities

| PD Content                 | Teaching Artists | Classroom Teachers | Arts Specialists |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Curriculum Design          | X                | X                  | X                |
| Student Assessment         | X                | X                  | X                |
| Disability Classifications | X                | X                  | X                |
| Partnering & Collaboration | X                | X                  |                  |

**X** Shared Professional Development Needs