

The logo consists of a circular globe with a blue and white color scheme. Overlaid on the globe is a semi-transparent image of several hands of different skin tones reaching towards the center. A large, pink, right-pointing triangle is superimposed over the globe and hands. The text 'Arts4all' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font across the center of the globe.

# Arts4all

**Creative activities for working  
with children of mixed abilities**

## Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to introduce some creative activities, considerations & recommendations that you may find useful when working with groups of children with mixed abilities. The artist has recorded her experience with various activities used and has made some suggestions and offered advice. We acknowledge that a lot of learning in this field occurs through hands-on experience and no two groups of children are the same. We hope that this resource pack might encourage and inspire people working with youth to appreciate how simple creative processes can be a very powerful tool in engaging children and developing many skills.

## Objectives & expected outcomes

- To deliver a series of creative workshops to develop interactive and creative skills
- To establish how art can be used as a tool for developing skills
- To identify specific skills and process in engaging children with mixed abilities
- To present knowledge & experiences that will allow staff/ tutors/ volunteers and students to use as guidelines when working with such groups
- To provide an afterschools service for local parents to which their children can attend
- To showcase the children's work to their families
- To provide the opportunity for staff to reflect on creative processes, methodologies, challenges & learning outcomes
- To create an open dialogue for staff to develop a plan for future training needs.



## Activity One {Bubble write our names}

An easy project that allowed us time to become familiar with each other on the first night and experiment with different materials.

**Materials required :** Paper, markers, pastels etc.

**The Process:** Following initial introductions each participant was given a sheet of paper and a pencil. The colouring materials were put in the middle of the table for sharing. I asked them to write their name as large as they could on the sheet in Bubble writing. I gave a demonstration of Bubble Writing for those who were unsure of what this was. As they proceeded, I went around to make sure everyone had nice big lettering and offered help to those who needed it. The next step was to decorate their name with pattern and colour. We had a discussion on the meaning of the word 'pattern'. While the kids worked, we discussed the plans for the forthcoming weeks workshops. Some words that came up during the discussion needed explaining such as 'Exhibition' and 'Mural'. When each drawing was complete, it was hung on the wall for everyone else to see.

**Did activity meet its objectives?** Yes. Each participant completed their own name design and the project wasn't too demanding of the facilitators time which allowed room for the planned discussion.

**Was this an effective activity for the group?** Yes, this project was enjoyed by all the group.

**Changes or Recommendations?** All in all, I was pleased with the outcome of this workshop . The only changes I might make is to be a bit more adventurous with the choice of materials provided, perhaps introducing some collage to them.



## Activity Two {Group painting to Music}

This activity encouraged group interaction and co operation. It also introduced the element of Music. It encouraged the group to use large, bold brush strokes and we were able to create two large scale paintings for our final showcase.

**Materials required :** Large stretched canvas, paintbrushes and sponges, acrylic paints and a selection of music.

**The Process:** Before the group arrived I pushed the tables together and covered them in oilcloth. I had the paints poured out into containers and placed on the tables. To avoid too much mess, I chose not to put out water for washing brushes. Instead I simply put plenty of brushes in each colour so no washing was necessary. I had two large canvases prepared but we decided to do a run through with large sheets of paper first. A variety of music was on stand by. I explained how they were to listen to the music and interpret the mood and feeling of it through their painting. The music played and the painting began.

**Did the activity meet its objectives?** The group began very tentatively, making small drawings on the very large sheets. They seemed more concerned about staying clean and trying to use the brushes in the same way they would use pencils. After a brief pause, I asked them to imagine dancing to the music. Whether it was calm and slow or loud and fast, they were asked to move their bodies more and use big broad brush strokes. This led to a dramatic change in their behaviour. They began to really listen to the music, moving around the table choosing colours and using large brush strokes and some even abandoned their brushes altogether preferring to use their hands. They were very directly interpreting the style and mood of the music through their painting. This definitely met the desired objectives.

**Was this an effective activity for the group? :** Yes. I think once the participants felt comfortable about making a bit of mess they relaxed and let their imaginations go with the mood of the music. They were totally engaged with the music and the application of the paint onto canvas and expressed themselves very freely.

**Changes or recommendation:** It was vital to this project that the room and materials were ready before the group arrived as we needed the full hour and half to work. Be prepared also for a lot of cleaning up after this project. Its very worthwhile having a variety of music prepared in advance.



## Activity Three {Love Bugs}

Introduce the group to basic sewing skills. Create small gifts for valentines day.

**Materials required :** Coloured felt, embroidery thread, needles, cushion stuffing & scissors

**The Process:** First have the group sketch designs on paper. Cut out the body shape of your design twice in your chosen felt. Sew on buttons for eyes and any other details such as legs, tails mouth etc. Now sew the two body shapes together using a very simple tack stitch around the edge leaving an opening to insert the stuffing. Pack the body with stuffing. Complete the sewing of the body.

**Did the activity meet its objectives?** The participants did make a very brave effort at the sewing and enjoyed creating their characters on paper.

**Was this an effective activity for the group?** No. While some of the group did manage to complete their piece, it did take over two workshops for this to happen and others did not manage to complete theirs at all. It required a lot of hands on assistance and often left some of the group waiting with nothing to do and this resulted in them getting distracted and very restless.

**Changes or recommendations?** The failure of this project was mainly down to the fact that the felt was so difficult to sew through so if I repeated this project I would search for a different material to use. I also think that having the bodies pre-cut before the class would save a lot of wasted time and waiting around as assistance was needed with the use of the scissors.





## Activity Four {Weaving}

This activity introduced the group to the process of weaving. It encouraged them to think outside the box when choosing materials aside from wool for their weave panel.

**Materials required :** Wooden frames to be used as looms, wool, buttons, beads, materials of different textures and long plastic embroidery needles.

**The Process:** Prepare the looms for each participant a few days before the workshop. Give a brief explanation of the project and a brief demonstration on the process. Everyone is asked to rummage through the wool and material box and find what they would like to use. Assistance is given to each participant to begin the weaving process by tying their chosen wool onto their loom.

**Did the activity meet its objectives ?** Yes.

**Was this an effective activity for the group?** This project was a definite success for a small number of the group. It required a lot of patience and concentration on the part of the participant and as a result proved too challenging for some of the group.

**Changes or recommendations :** I think it took far too long to see any result with this project and this caused some frustration and loss of concentration in some of the participants. Although it didn't suit all the group I do feel it's a project worth presenting to them again at a later date and perhaps using chunkier wool and other materials to speed the process up. I would also make a more open spaces in the preparation of the looms which would make it much less fiddly and quicker to get results with.



## Activity Five {Clay Families}

This activity involves creating a model of their own family, pets included. It helps to develop model making skills.

**Materials required :** Clay, boards on which to store the work for drying, a kiln to fire the clay work, coloured glazes and slips.

**The Process:** Put the tables together and cover them in oilcloths. Once all the group are seated, give a brief explanation of the project. Give each participant a ball of clay. Offer assistance where needed. The next step is to fire the individual pieces. Paint, glaze and fire the pieces again.

**Did this activity meet its objectives?** Yes. Everyone managed to create very individual pieces of work.

**Was this an effective activity for the group?** This project allowed everyone to create pieces in their own individual style. Clay is a very accessible material for all levels and abilities.

**Changes and recommendations :** The more practice a person has with clay the better they become at creating with it so I would definitely be using this project again but it does require a lot of safe storage space to keep it in tact.





## Activity Six { Monster Collage }

To learn about rubbings and the different textures that can be achieved. To appeal to the wilder side of their imaginations.

**Materials required :** Crayons, cartridge paper, markers, pritt stick and black sheets of paper for mounting.

**The Process:** Before giving out the materials explain to the group that we need to take a rubbing of each persons sole of their shoe. This is done by placing a sheet of white paper against the sole of the shoe and rubbing all over the surface with the side of a crayon. Each person will require assistance and you can suggest that they help each other out to speed the process along. Once everyone has a rubbing or two they then draw on a separate sheet, arms, legs ,eyes etc.all the features they need to create their monster. Encourage them to be creative in this area by maybe adding horns, hair and any other weird details they can think of. Cut out the rubbings. To create the monsters, assemble the rubbing as the body and add all other features, glueing them to the black paper. Once everything is stuck in place, have the group invent names for their creatures.

**Did this activity meet its objectives ?** Yes. At the start of the workshop, I gave a detailed description of the activity, placing strong emphasis on creating something really wild and crazy. They were coming up with all sorts of suggestions at this stage and this discussion really got their imaginations going so that by the time I gave out the materials they were bursting to start. It was the one project out of all where there wasn't a sound out of them for an hour while they drew and invented and cut and glued.

**Was this a suitable activity for this group?** Absolutely. It completely captured their imaginations and was such an easy project for them to creative. All the tasks were suitable for their abilities, the cutting, drawing, glueing, rubbings.

**Changes or recommendations :** This worked really well and I wouldn't change anything.



## Activity Seven {Pottery }

Introduction to the pottery wheel.

**Materials required :** Pottery wheel, clay and water.

**The Process:** Everyone makes their own claypot while seated at the pottery wheel. After the pots have dried, they can paint them.

**Did this activity meet your objectives?** Yes everyone got to make a pot and got a turn to experience the pottery wheel.

**Was this activity suitable for this group?** The pottery wheel was a big hit with this group. When they werent taking their turn most of them were happy to pull a chair up and watch someone else so by the end of the workshop everyone was around the wheel.

**Changes or recommendations :** Be sure to have a lot of safe storage space for the pots to dry.



## Activity Eight { Create a Story }

To get them thinking in pictures and be able to tell their story through pictures. To create a story with a beginning, middle and conclusion.

**Materials required :** White cartridge paper, markers and pencils.

**The Process:** Suggest to the group a couple of options or themes for their story. ie : A day in my life, My favourite holiday memory, Things that make me happy, sad, angry, bored etc. Divide their page up into six equal boxes. Each box should contain just a sentence or two of the story and the rest of the story is to be told through drawings. Encourage lots of detail in the drawings and keep the sentences short.

**Did this activity meet your objectives?** Yes

**Was this activity suitable for the group?** Yes it appealed particularly to the boys in the group.

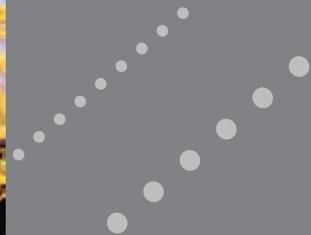
**Changes or recommendations:** There was a lot of assembling of the books on my part for the showcase. But I do think it was worthwhile as they were very happy when they had their story handed back to them in book form.





## Tips for successful workshops

- Discuss with the group any ideas they might have for helping the workshops to run smoothly . Have them decide on some basic rules before any workshop takes place such as good manners, respecting each other and each others art work,tPatience, turn taking etc.
- Have the room set up and materials ready before the group arrive.
- Explain each project carefully and clearly before ever handing out the materials.
- Don't make the workshop all about the art process. There are lots of opportunities within a workshop to engage the group in discussions which help them to interact with one another and get to know one another. This always helps to make a workshop run smoother.
- Ideally you should try to have a back up plan as the best ideas can fail miserably and unexpectedly.





## Nóra Furlong {project co-ordinator}

Nóra Furlong (M.Soc.Sc in Youth & Community Work) has been working directly delivering creative and development education programmes to a wide range of youth since 2003.

She has just completed a six month temporary position as Youth Arts Coordinator in the Gurrabraher Arts Programme, Youth Work Ireland, where she was responsible for managing creative programmes including theatre, music & arts programmes meeting the needs of targeted young people and children.

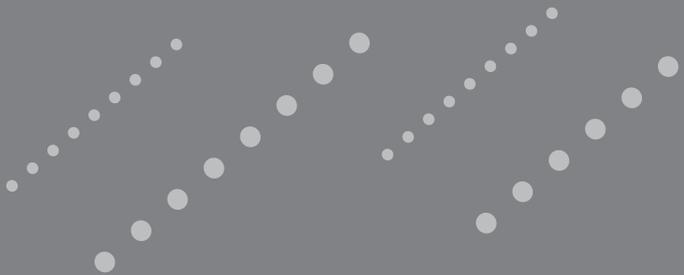
She is currently the Youth Arts Worker in Mayfield Arts, Newbury House where she is involved in delivering training to artists and youth workers in creative approaches in development education. She works directly with teenagers supporting them to engage in creative projects which include visual arts, theatre, music and multi-media projects and organises events to showcase work and engage the public with the young peoples creative abilities.

Nora is co-coordinator of the Arts, Participation and Development Course delivered through the Crawford College of Art & Design (CIT)

## Marie Hendrick {artist}

Marie Hendrick (Dip. Product Design/Ceramics) has worked as art teacher and enterprise trainer with adults and children for over 20 years. Over the last 10 years she has worked primarily with Enable Ireland designing and delivering FETAC Art & Design and Craft Level 3 modules for adults with special needs.

During her career she has worked with prisoners in Fort Mitchel Prison, Spike Island, social care students of the Cork Institute of Technology, service users of the Brothers of Charity, Lota, youths at the Cork Probation Hostel, students of the COPE Foundation, members of the travelling community and with several schools and childrens community groups on the northside of Cork city.





## Final Showcase







This project was kindly funded by Cork City Council Arts Office