
Pdnet Pro Forma Case Study

Case Study title:

Art - Portraiture projects for students with a variety of PD.

Child/Young Person's age and barriers to learning:

Students aged 12-19 years, students with variety of physical difficulties, including delayed fine motor skills development, Cerebral Palsy (mild diplegia, moderate quadriplegia and severe quadriplegia – including students using highly bespoke wheelchairs) students with rare chromosomal abnormalities and complex epilepsy.

Setting or School:

2-19 special school for students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties*

**Physical adaptations will often be replicable in mainstream settings, across age ranges.*

Background information:

During redevelopment of the upper school curriculums, the opportunity was taken to broaden the Art teaching in this school setting; extending the range of artists studied, techniques used and using Art to engage students with other areas of learning (e.g. developing communication, ICT, Literacy and Maths skills)

What were the main challenges to address?

1. Physical difficulties made it challenging for students to record and create their ideas, to a standard they were satisfied with (e.g. creating pieces as they envisaged them)
2. Physical difficulties limited students abilities to use and control traditional art media (e.g. pencils, paints, pastels etc.)
3. Staff producing work *for* students, focusing on producing a 'nice' outcome, rather than seeking alternative access methods and giving choice.

Who was involved?

Curriculum Lead, Teachers, TAs and students across the upper school classes.

What happened? What was the impact?

Designed, trialled and evaluated a series of portrait-focused Art topics now included in the secondary age curriculum for the school.

- Some students began the portraiture projects with the view that they would not be able to do it as their physical disability made drawing a face (pencil on paper) difficult or impossible.
- Use of photography was particularly powerful for students with physical disabilities, both as a primary Art medium and to produce source material for other work.

- Students were able to experiment with ways to represent themselves visually (e.g. by changing backgrounds, props, positions, expressions, costumes, hair, makeup) through photography and video more easily than via paper-based media. Frida Kahlo, Sophie Calle and Bill Viola were favourite artists used to inspire this work.
- Some students were encouraged to explore and make decisions about how to depict their physical disabilities (e.g. choosing whether to highlight or not, to show their wheelchair in the image, to be in a different seat)
- Using ICT to manipulate photographs (e.g. changing colours, adding effects/filters, cropping images, collaging images, adding 'drawn' elements) enabled some students with more complex physical disabilities to access tasks other students completed using traditional Art media. Various programmes and apps are available, students used the ICT devices and access methods they use in other curriculum areas.
- Using printed photographs (multiple copies) to create collage portraits was very popular, students liked that they could recognise themselves and experiment with their image, without relying on fine motor skills (e.g. drawing, painting) to produce work. In this way students created collaged comicbook-style images, photo montage portraits in the style of David Hockney, and Chris Offili-style images.
- Tracing faces and features (tracing shadows and darker areas, rather than full outlines) produced very recognisable base images of students, which could then be worked over using other media, and retain the students' likenesses (e.g. in different art media, exploring colours, exploring backgrounds, adding/removing/obscuring/duplicating features). Traced base images were used to produce portraits in the styles of Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Julian Opie, and Vincent Van Gough amongst others.
- Photocopying and enlarging photos and traced base images (see above) allowed students to work at much larger scale, in some cases reducing the need for fine motor control.

What do the child, young person, family, school, other professionals say about the difference this has made?

- Students reported greater satisfaction in their portraiture work when they had used photographic media/start points (see above) and felt their portraits were better representations of themselves than work produced from a blank start point, some students were better able to recognise their own work. Students were also better able to recognise each other in their work, which led to richer peer evaluation.
- Students showed great pride in their work, particularly when other people recognised them in a portrait.
- Students liked having more choice in their work, compared to more traditional drawing/painting-based portraiture which was often limited to choosing coloured paint.

- Staff reported that using traced base images allowed students to focus on other aspects of Art aside from drawing skills (which were often a source of frustration) and let portraiture move beyond a very basic activity.
- Portraiture was often linked to other curriculum areas, including PSHCE (self-identity, emotions and expression, relationships) History, English (Frida Kahlo's biography) Staff were also able to work on many students IEP targets through the portraiture activities, especially those relating to communication, decision making, direction of support, and use of ICT.

Lessons we've learned and top tips to replicate practice:

1. The importance of pupil voice in creating ownership of their work, and the impact of students feeling pride in work they have created.
2. To explore non-traditional Art media and processes, photography and ICT and how they may enable students to produce the work they envisage. This includes staff supporting early stages of the work (e.g. base images) or aiding work under students direction.
3. The potential for cross-curricular learning through Art and portraiture activities.