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Colors of Connection: A Manual for Cultivating Social and Emotional Skills in Children with Disabilities Through Creative Arts

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Colors of Connection: A Manual for Cultivating Social and Emotional Skills in Children with Disabilities Through Creative Arts

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Background

Social and emotional skills are the skills necessary to manage emotions, care about others, make decisions, behave sensibly, and develop positive relationships (CASEL, 2020). For children, developing these skills positively impacts their ability to attend school, interact with family and peers, and participate in society (Anthony et al., 2023). While many children develop these skills through engaging in recreational activities with peers, children with disabilities (CWD) have limited opportunities for participation due to lack of access to programs (Bedell et al., 2013). Additionally, while many children develop these skills naturally, research suggests that most children need intentional instruction to develop and refine their social and emotional skills (Faria et al., 2018). One existing creative-arts program for CWD currently provides great opportunities for peer interactions, however it is lacking intentional instruction for Social-Emotional learning (SEL).

Problem

An existing creative arts after-school program for CWD has limited structured activities geared toward social-emotional learning (SEL), which is restricting the children's opportunities for improved performance, participation, and overall well-being.

Purpose

To develop a sustainable, creative arts based, SEL program to enhance the overall well-being of CWD attending an established after-school program.

Methods

Strengths & Needs Phase

- Observed current program
- Developed relationships
- Administered DESSA Assessments
- Conducted Informal Interviews



Development Phase

- Collaborated with staff
- Created Colors of Connection program & digital manual



Implementation Phase

- Educated Staff
- Implemented activities
- Documented program engagement and progress



Evaluation Phase

- Analyzed findings
- Readministered DESSA Assessment
- Conducted Informal Interviews



Revision Phase

- Collaborated with mentor
- Revised digital manual



Dissemination & Sustainability Phase

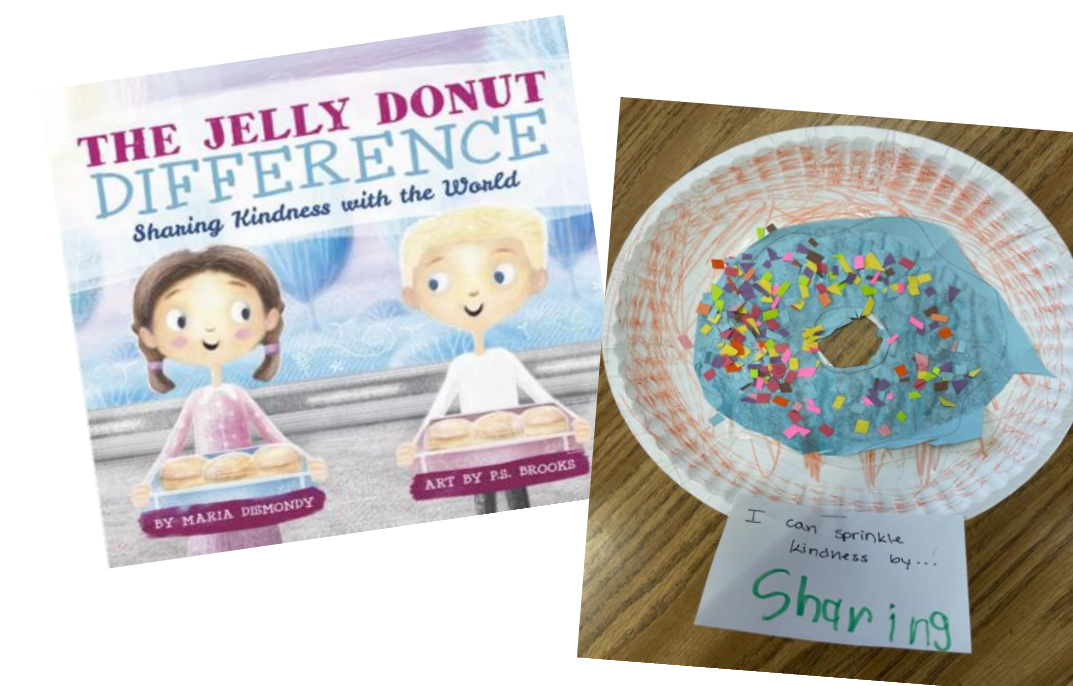
- Created materials for sustainability
- Presented findings & sustainability plan

Program Overview

Components of Digital Manual

Five-week curriculum, each week dedicated to one SEL competency

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each week has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of SEL competency • Children's literature, crafts, & theater games that align with the SEL competency • Parent letter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each activity has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity Objective • Activity Goal • Importance of Activity • Materials Required • Picture illustrations & written procedure • Possible Modifications • Discussion Questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional Components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompting chart • Self-regulation chart |
|--|---|---|



Discussion

Significance

Positively impacts:

- CWD
- Parents
- Staff
- OT Profession

Strengths

- Theory-based
- Sustainable
- User Friendly
- Inclusive
- Flexible

Limitations

- Attendance
- Informal Research
- Extrinsic Factors
- Parent Willingness

Next Steps

- Expansion
- Research study
- Extended duration
- Additional measures

Digital Manual



References



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Note: This project did not involve human subjects and did not require IRB approval.