

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Youth express self and build skills through the visual arts

AT A GLANCE

Youth have fun learning and practicing art techniques and skills using the Outside the Box visual arts learning labs.

The Situation

Professional art educators often think quality arts education is an essential element of learning and should be offered in an academic settings. However, schools and museums cannot do it alone. 4-H continues to complement what professional art educators offer by providing visual arts programming. With our focus on developing the whole child to thrive as they move through stages of growth, we offer visual arts curricula, resources, programming and Outside the Box learning labs.

Our Response

Outside the Box (OTB) learning labs were developed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic to keep youth engaged in the 4-H program. With a caring adult (4-H professional, volunteer, AmeriCorps, parent or teacher) facilitating the learning, each youth receives a learning lab (box) with fun and engaging topic-specific sequential lessons and materials to do the hands-on art.

The OTB visual arts learning lab consists of seven drawing, painting and sculpting lessons that align with the new 4-H Create Art Now curriculum. While the lessons are designed to be fun and engaging, they also



Create Art Now day camp. UI Extension Canyon County. Photo by Carrie Clarich, Extension educator.

help youth build artistic skills and vocabulary, along with critical thinking, communicating, planning and organizing skills. In addition, the visual arts learning lab gives the youth robust art experiences allowing them to express themselves, thus supporting their overall well-being.

The adult helps schedule group sessions and guide the youth through the lessons. At the end of the scheduled sessions, youth respond to a survey asking which lessons they did and what they liked and learned.

Program Outcomes

The 374 survey responses reported here are from youth who were at least in fourth grade or higher and at least eight years or older. Not all youth did all seven

visual art lessons, and not all youth responded to each question. The response mean is calculated for each question using the responses from youth who did the lesson. Reasons for not completing the lesson may vary from the adult helper who was not comfortable teaching the lesson to the group who did not meet seven times to complete all lessons. Youth may have also been absent the day the lesson was taught or simply not interested in doing the lesson.

Table 1 shows the youth responded that they liked the lessons (67% to 84%). However, a small percentage indicated they did not like a specific lesson (4% to 11%), and some lessons received a neutral response (9% to 23%).

Table 1: OTB visual art lessons and youth responses

Art Lessons	I did like it	Neutral	I did not like it
Contour Drawing (n=269)	67%	23%	11%
Charcoal Expression (n=276)	71%	21%	8%
Color Wheel Challenge (n=252)	73%	19%	8%
Creating with Monochromatic Color (n=278)	71%	21%	8%
Smooth Acrylic Pour (n=292)	87%	9%	4%
Sculpting In the Round (n=317)	84%	11%	5%
Tissue Paper Sculpt (n=279)	78%	13%	9%

OTB visual arts lessons lead youth through art technique practices that build skills and self-expression. The survey asked seven skill-based indicators to assess critical thinking, communicating, planning and organizing skill development. Critical thinking skill development indicators are learning a new technique, trying a technique several times and making changes in artwork after practicing a technique. Planning and organizing skill indicators are making changes and enjoying the creation process. Communicating and self-

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Maureen Toomey, Area Extension Educator • UI Extension 4-H Youth Development • 208-454-7648 • mtoomey@uidaho.edu

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expression skill indicators describe what they see and their favorite part of their artwork. Table 2 shows the percentage of youth responses for each skill indicator.

Table 2: Skill-building aspects of doing visual arts

Art Skills	Really Agree or Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree or Really Disagree
<i>While learning to create, the youth was able to:</i>			
Learn a new technique to create art. (n= 373)	87%	8%	4%
Try a technique several times (n=368)	76%	15%	10%
Make changes in artwork after practicing a technique (n=369)	73%	16%	10%
Enjoy the process of creating an artwork (n=374)	93%	6%	2%
Give artwork a title (n=342)	63%	22%	16%
Describe what they see in artwork (n=341)	79%	14%	7%
Describe their favorite part of their artwork (n=339)	80%	13%	8%

Art education research demonstrates that youth can express themselves and cope with emotional well-being through creating, reflecting and practicing. OTB survey results support the research showing that youth express themselves and learn skills.

Collaborator and Sponsor

Nancy Shelstad, area Extension educator, Outside the Box concept creator, and Yosele Leon Perez, 4-H program and data manager. Outside the Box Visual Arts is supported through a grant from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare under the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021.