The Lived Experiences of Special Education Teachers on Art Integration in Teaching Literacy to Learners with Special Needs

.

ABSTRact

|  |
| --- |
| This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of special education teachers integrating art into literacy instruction for learners with special needs at Queens Row Elementary School. The research aimed to understand how creative, multisensory strategies enhance literacy development and classroom engagement. Using a qualitative design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with five special education teachers. Thematic analysis identified key patterns in instructional practices, challenges, and insights. Findings revealed that integrating visual arts, music, dance movement, and multimedia supported phonemic awareness, vocabulary growth, and reading comprehension. Teachers observed that multisensory and visual strategies increased learner engagement, improved memory retention, and encouraged creative expression. Challenges included sensory sensitivities, limited resources, and inconsistent support from families. Educators addressed these issues through differentiated instruction and routine-based strategies. The study concludes that art integration offers a transformative, inclusive approach to literacy instruction, fostering cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development in learners with special needs. It recommends increased institutional support, ongoing professional development for teachers, and multidisciplinary collaboration to sustain effective and inclusive literacy practices. |

*Keywords: Art Integration, Special Education, Literacy Instruction, Multisensory Strategies, Learner Engagement*

1. INTRODUCTION

Integrating arts in education provides a multisensory, learner-centered approach that supports cognitive, emotional, and physical development, especially for learners with special needs (Samsudin et al., 2025). Grounded in constructivism, Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences, and Piaget’s cognitive development, arts integration enhances literacy, motivation, and emotional regulation. Globally, it fosters inclusion and engagement (UNESCO, 2021; Anderson & Wendt, 2022; Shouma, 2020), while Philippine programs like the MATATAG Curriculum and initiatives from DepEd and NCCA target learning gaps through inclusive education (DepEd, 2023, 2024; NCCA, 2024; Prajapati & Kumar, 2021). Research confirms arts integration improves vocabulary, comprehension, and reduces anxiety via visual supports (Becker, 2020; Reisman & Severino, 2020; Gross, 2020), with local studies endorsing its positive impact through visual and dramatic arts (Caballero et al., 2023). Emerging technologies such as digital storytelling and music tools further enrich learning (Lee & Ho, 2023; Pavlou, 2020; Wu & Teixeira, 2024; Lou & Huang, 2024; Amwiine & Nnenna, 2024). However, challenges including limited training, scarce resources, and rigid curricula—especially in public schools—impede implementation (Gerber et al., 2024; Mareza et al., 2024; Saunders, 2021). Caballero et al. (2023) note resource constraints among SPED teachers, while Crispel and Kasperski (2021) highlight the lack of insight into teachers’ lived experiences with arts integration. This study fills that gap via a reflexive phenomenological approach exploring special education teachers’ experiences integrating art into literacy at Queens Row Elementary School. The researcher’s dual role as SPED teacher and resource illustrator adds depth, with reflexivity fostering critical self-awareness (Kennedy et al., 2024). Findings aim to inform inclusive curriculum design, policy, and teacher training to improve arts-integrated literacy education for learners with special needs.

1.1 Statement of The Problem

This phenomenological study explores special education teachers’ lived experiences using art integration to teach literacy skills to learners with special needs. The following questions and assumptions guide the study:

1. What are the lived experiences of special education teachers on using art integration in teaching literacy to learners with special needs?

2. What themes can emerge from the experiences of special education teachers who integrate arts into teaching literacy to learners with special needs?

3. What key insights do special education teachers gain from using art integration in their literacy instruction practices?

4. What action plans can be developed based on the lived experiences, emerging themes, and insights of the special education teachers to improve literacy outcomes through art integration for learners with special needs?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter reviews key concepts and relevant studies from existing literature to provide a comprehensive foundation for this research.

2.1 Arts Integration and Its Background

Arts integration, through visual arts, music, dance, and multimedia, enhanced creativity, critical thinking, and comprehension, especially for learners with special needs (Shouma, 2020; Heiman, 2020). Grounded in constructivism, it promoted hands-on, collaborative, and reflective learning (National Art Education Association, 2021). In the Philippines, the MATATAG Music and Arts Curriculum used this approach to reduce curriculum overload and develop cultural, emotional, and 21st-century skills (DepEd, 2023).

**2.2 Literacy Rate in Special Education**

Reading and writing supported communication, academic access, independence, and self-advocacy for learners with special needs. Yet, only 30% met proficiency in the 2022 NAEP reading assessment, compared to 42% of non-disabled peers. Outcomes improved through evidence-based, multisensory phonics instruction by trained teachers with sufficient resources (Al Dahhan, 2021). In the Philippines, literacy and school participation were limited by disability severity, location, and socioeconomic status (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2021). Solutions included assistive technology, parental involvement, ALS teacher training, and inclusive environments.

**2.3 Art Integration on Literacy Development in Learners with Special Needs**

Becker (2020) found that art integration enhanced literacy in learners with special needs through multisensory, individualized strategies that improved engagement, vocabulary, comprehension, and expression. Reisman and Severino (2020) noted that tools like drawing and graphic organizers reduced frustration in dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. Gross (2020) emphasized collaboration between special education and art teachers for tailored instruction. Caballero et al. (2023) reported that storytelling and active art participation increased motivation and confidence, improving literacy access.

**2.4 Cognitive, Psychomotor, And Behavioral Outcomes of Art Integration in Special Education**

Gerber et al. (2024) highlighted art’s role in supporting learners with autism and sensory challenges by improving problem-solving, motor skills, and regulation. Becker (2020) emphasized visual arts for focus and expression in behavioral issues. Rugmai (2021) and Wu and Teixeira (2024) showed that sensory-rich, guided art fostered cognitive, emotional, and social development.

2.5 Teachers' Experiences and Perspectives on Art Integration in Special Education

Jabbour (2023) and Gerber et al. (2024) showed that visual arts, music, dance, and theater promoted literacy, self-expression, and inclusion. Despite valuing these methods, teachers faced training and resource gaps. In the Philippines, Caballero et al. (2023) called for stronger professional development, while Mareza et al. (2024) emphasized community support amid limited funding.

2.6 Art Integration and Multimedia Technology

Technology-assisted art integration supported cognitive, motor, and socio-emotional growth in learners with special needs through inclusive, engaging environments. Tools like computer-aided music, multimedia, and digital storytelling enhanced creativity, language, and collaboration (Lou & Huang, 2024; Lee & Ho, 2023; Pavlou, 2020). Effective integration within UDL and TPACK frameworks required teacher training and infrastructure (Anderson & Putman, 2020). However, access and readiness challenges remained (Dangui, 2023; Dan, 2023), highlighting the need for continued professional development and institutional support.

2.7 Synthesis

Art integration in special education effectively enhances literacy and overall development by engaging learners through multisensory, hands-on, and learner-centered approaches rooted in constructivism (Becker, 2020; Heiman, 2020; Goldberg, 2021; Caballero et al., 2023). It improves cognitive, motor, behavioral, and emotional skills, supporting vocabulary, comprehension, and social interaction (Rugmai, 2021; Gerber et al., 2024). Despite challenges like limited resources and training (Gerber et al., 2024; Mareza et al., 2024), teachers observe increased learner motivation and resilience. Technology, such as digital storytelling and multimedia, further supports differentiated learning and collaboration (Lou & Huang, 2024; Wu & Teixeira, 2024; Gross, 2020). National programs like DepEd’s MATATAG and NCCA promote art integration, highlighting the need for continued professional development and institutional support to maximize benefits (DepEd, 2023; NCCA, 2024; Saunders, 2021).

3. Methodology

This chapter summarizes the methods used to explore the experiences of special education teachers with art-integrated literacy instruction.

**3.1 Research Design**

This qualitative phenomenological study explored special education teachers’ lived experiences integrating art into literacy instruction for learners with special needs. The researcher’s background as a SPED teacher provided insider insights. Credibility and bias reduction were ensured through reflexivity, including self-reflection, a reflexive journal, and peer debriefing, as recommended by Kennedy et al. (2024).

**3.2 Participants and Sampling Technique**

The study purposively selected five SPED teachers from Queens Row Elementary School with 5 years or less experience and background in art-integrated literacy, all of whom consented to participate. The researcher, as a reflective co-participant, contributed insights from her dual role as SPED teacher and resource illustrator.

**3.3 Research Instrument**

Data were gathered through validated, pilot-tested semi-structured interviews covering teacher background, art-integrated literacy practices, and reflective insights. Field notes and audio recordings supplemented the data to ensure depth and accuracy.

**3.4 Data Gathering Procedure**

Data were collected through focus group discussions with five participants, each lasting approximately one hour and conducted in a school setting at a convenient time. Sessions were audio-recorded with consent, and verbatim transcriptions ensured the authenticity of responses.

**3.5 Data Analysis Procedure**

Thematic analysis was employed following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework: data familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and report writing. Initial codes were grouped into broader themes representing participants’ shared experiences, supported by direct quotes and contextual interpretation.

4. results and discussion

**Problem 1. What are the lived experiences of special education teachers on using art integration in teaching literacy to learners with special needs?**

Special education teachers’ experiences reveal that art integration effectively engages learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Intellectual Disability (ID) through the visual arts, music, dance, and multimedia. Visual activities enhanced vocabulary, phonemic awareness, memory, and fine motor skills, while music and movement improved focus and letter sound retention. Challenges included sensory sensitivities, bilingual labeling confusion, overuse of visuals, and routine disruptions, which were addressed by offering choices, gradually reducing the use of visuals, and maintaining consistent routines. These findings underscore the need for flexible, multisensory, and inclusive literacy approaches in special education.

**Problem 2. What themes can emerge from the experiences of special education teachers who integrate arts into teaching literacy to learners with special needs?**

**Table 1. Thematic Analysis of Art Integration in Teaching Literacy to Learners with Special Needs**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Superordinate Theme** | **Subtheme** | **Evidence (Actual Responses)** | **Translation** |
| Art Integration and Literacy | Art Activities and Techniques | "Art integration ang ginamit naming usually finger painting, coloring, paper cutting, collage. Tapos paper tearing." | "We use art integration, usually finger painting, coloring, paper cutting, collage, and paper tearing." |
| "Yung art integration in teaching literacy learning maganda ito sa kanilang vocabulary through visual or picture reading." | "Art integration in teaching literacy is good because it helps them with vocabulary through visual or picture reading." |
| "Art integration ginagamit ko talaga sa activities, usually gumagamit kami ng art integration sa literacy activities." | "We use art integration a lot in our activities, usually in literacy activities." |
| "Maganda itong art integration kasi natatackle yung iba’t ibang subjects like reading." | "Art integration is great because it addresses various subjects like reading." |
| “Mas na-express, nag-eenjoy ang mga bata sa gusto nilang gawin through art integration kasi mas marami pagpipilian. Ginagamit namin yung visual, music, dance at multimedia through TV o videos para maturuan sila ng literacy.” | “Children can express themselves better and enjoy what they want to do through art integration because it offers more options. We use visuals, music, dance, and multimedia, such as TV or videos, to teach them literacy.” |
| Engagement and Focus | Learners with Special Needs: Motivation and Involvement | "Ang mga bata excited sa arts to discover and explore more and paint, ang pinaka importante gusto nila yung kulay." | "The children are excited about the arts to discover, explore more, and paint. That is the most important for them, they like the colors." |
| "Interesado silang ginagawa, tapos may free will dahil hindi restricted na ito lang dapat." | "They are interested in what they are doing, and have free will because they are not restricted to a specific way of doing things." |
| "Mas naalala nila ang lesson, ang sound ng letter kapag kinakanta ko kasi sinasabayan nila ito." | "They remember the lesson and sound of the letters when I sing them because they follow along with me." |
| “Mas magandang alamin kung ano yung favorite color nila, Kung mag iintegrate ka mas maganda aalamin yung favorite nila kasi duon magfofocus mas magiging interesado sa mga bagay na gusto nila. Yun ang unang step para sa motivation. Kung mahilig sila sa bilog lagyan ng maraming bilog, mas mag fofocus sila. “ | "It's better to find out what their favorite color is. If you're going to integrate something, it's best to know what they like because that's where they'll focus more and be more interested—in things they enjoy. That's the first step toward motivation. If they like circles, include a lot of circles—they'll focus more." |
| Visual Learning and Memory | Visual Aids and Memory Retention | "Visual learners talaga ang mga bata natin sa sped." | "Our learners in SPED are visual learners." |
| "Visual learners sila, mas nag iimprove sila pag nakikita nila yung bagay, nauunderstand din ang ibig sabihin ni teacher pag nakikita nila yung picture. naeenhance ang kanilang memory or learning capability at naretain of lesson sakanila." | "They are visual learners. They improve more when they see things. They also understand what the teacher means when they see pictures. This helps enhance their memory, learning capability, and retention of the lesson." |
| "Pag guamagamit kasi tayo ng visuals nagkakaroon ng memory retention, natatandaan tapos nadadagdagan ang kanilang vocabulary." | "When we use visuals, they develop memory retention, remember it, and their vocabulary increases." |
| Challenges in Art Integration | Sensory Sensitivity | "Pero problem sa music meron mga sensory issues yung mga bata nag cocover sila, ang intervention na ginagawa nilelessen ang volume" | "The problem with music is that some kids have sensory issues, they cover their ears. The intervention we use is to lower the volume." |
| "Paunti- unti nilalakasan ko ang volume ng tv. Everyday ginagawa ng walang skip." | "I gradually increase the volume on the TV, and do this every day without skipping." |
| Multilingual and Picture-based Confusion | "Dapat iintroduce mo din yung dalawang tawag sa bagay. Para maiwasan ang pagkalito." | "You should also introduce both names for the object to avoid confusion." |
| "Ang reading-literacy natin ay Tagalog ngayong taon in preparation para sa kinder sa MTB hanggang Grade 3, kaya iniintroduce pag-aralan ang Tagalog. Ang challenges lang icoconvert pa natin sa English word para mas maintindihan nila. Pero at least, nasasanay naman at naging success din, katulad ng isa nating learner na English-speaking sa SPED pero pagdating ng kinder, Tagalog din naman siya. Na-adopt niya na rin. Siguro preparation din talaga.” | "This year, our reading and literacy lessons are in Tagalog as preparation for kindergarten under the Mother Tongue-Based (MTB) curriculum, which continues up to Grade 3. That’s why we introduce and encourage learning Tagalog. The challenge is that we still need to translate those words into English so they can be better understood. However, at least they get used to it, and it turns out to be successful, as seen in one of our learners who was English-speaking in SPED, but now he’s in kindergarten, he also learned Tagalog. He’s able to adapt. I guess it is part of the preparation." |
| "Ang pictures kasi simula para matuto yung bata sa reading." | "The pictures are used as a starting point for teaching reading to the learners." |
| “Yung challenges pag picture. Kailangan specific, huwag na iba-iba. Dapat close to reality.” | “That’s the challenge with using pictures. Must be specific and consistent, not varied. It should also be as realistic as possible. “ |
| “Yung realia? applicable din bukod sa picture reading. pero depende sa availability ng material. Kung applicable sa lesson at need ng bata.” | "Realia, right? It’s also applicable aside from picture reading. However, it still depends on the availability of material, and whether it’s suitable for the lesson and the learner’s needs." |
| Routine Disruption | "Pag namali tayo ng tugtog o na play, mag-ca-cause ng tantrums kasi routine nga sila." | "If we play the wrong song or tune, it causes tantrums because it disrupts their routine." |
| “Naranasan ko ito sa isang bata ko, kapag nakita lahat ng activity sheets sa harap ilan ang sasagutan, kukulayan, art activities, at babasahin kailangan niyang malaman ang routine, tulad ng activity 1, 2, 3, at 4, para alam niya kung kailan matatapos. Kapag hindi ito nasunod o hindi ipinaliwanag kung ilan ang gagawin, nagkakaroon siya ng tantrums sa kalagitnaan, lalo na kapag pakiramdam na masyadong marami ang gagawin. Nawawalan ng focus at parang tinatamad na.” | “I experienced this with one of my learners. When he saw all the activity sheets laid out, he needed clear guidance on what to answer, which colors to use, what art activities to complete, and what to read. To help him understand when he would be finished, he had to become familiar with the routine, including Activities 1, 2, 3, and 4. If this routine wasn’t followed or if it wasn’t explained how many tasks he needed to complete, he would become frustrated and throw tantrums midway, especially when he felt overwhelmed by the amount of work. He would lose focus and become unmotivated.” |
| “Oo, so pag nagtatntrums siya sa middle ng routine ire-remind mo nananman siya o music time palang,” | "Yes, so if they start throwing tantrums in the middle of the routine, just remind them, 'Oh, it is music time.'" |
| “Through routine sa everyday na ginagawa ng bata natutunan nila ang ginagawa na pagkasunod- sunod. Mahalaga ang routine kasi papasok ang behavioral may positive effect kapag na implement mo sakanila ang rules and routine. “ | "Through routine, children learn the sequence of what they do every day. Routine is important because it incorporates behavioral aspects that have a positive effect when you implement rules and routines with them." |
| Effective Techniques in Literacy | Visual, Music, and Dance | "Visual, music, and dance movement." | "Visual, music, and dance movement." |
| Visual, kasi nga visual learners sila na art activities to help them remember the letters, sounds and music lover din mga bata natin; pag paulit ulit naririnig diba may retention.” | ““They are primarily visual learners, so art activities help them remember letters and sounds more effectively. Additionally, our children love music; hearing songs or sounds repeatedly supports their retention and recall.” |
| ”Yes, sa visual like claveria picture reading, then music and dance movement para ma catch natin attention ng bata through pictures at gusto din nila nasayaw. Example pag inintroduce yung letters pwede through action song napapanoodin ng bata sa tv, sasabayan ni teacher at mga bata.” | “Yes, for visual learning—such as Claveria’s picture reading—and through music and dance movements, we can effectively capture learners’ attention because they enjoy both visuals and dancing. For example, when introducing letters, teachers and learners can participate in action songs, which can be watched on TV, making the learning experience engaging and interactive.” |
| Letter Visualization and Manipulation | "Gumagamit kami ng beadwork for letter formation, tracing letters, and letter collage making." | "We use beadwork for letter formation, tracing letters, and letter collage making." |
| “Sa art activities cutting, paper tearing, clay, yarn- lacing. “ | "In art activities: cutting, paper tearing, clay modeling, and yarn lacing." |
| “Tracing ng letters through the use of color para mas makita ng bata. letter collage using colored papers.” | "Letter tracing using colors to make it more visible for the child, and letter collage using colored papers." |
| “Yan coloring, drawing, and cut and paste para ma visualize nila ang letters and things that start sa letter.” | “That includes coloring, drawing, and cut-and-paste activities that help learners visualize the letters and objects that begin with those letters.” |
| “ Mga art activities na sinabi ko nung umpisa coloring, collage, picture cutting, paper tearing, gumagamit din ng manipulatives for visual like letter blocks and puzzle.” | “The art activities I mentioned earlier include coloring, collage, picture cutting, and paper tearing. We also use manipulatives for visuals, like letter blocks and puzzles." |
| Teacher Adaptation and Flexibility in Art Integration | Adapting Art Forms and Media in Art Integration | “Ako naman noong unang turo ko di pa masyadong gamit ang tv mostly ang ginagamit natin ay tarpapel. Naranasan ko mula doon sa semi technological tools ang gamit sa learning hanggang sa ngayon high- tech na available ang videos, animations. para sakin malaki talaga ang evolvement nito kasi marami tayong nagagawa na manipulative materials incorporating our lesson.” | "In my case, when I first started teaching, we didn’t use TVs much. We mostly used tarpapel. I experienced the transition from using semi-technological tools in learning to the high-tech resources we have now, such as videos and animations. For me, the evolution has been significant because we can now do so much more, including incorporating manipulative materials into our lessons." |
| “Yes nagiging interactive sila. Yun ang kagandahan sa ngayon. Pero ako talaga di ko biniitawan ang traditional abakada ganun parin approach ko pero ginagamitan lang ng multimedia o visual through picture.” | "Yes, they become more interactive with it. That is the advantage nowadays. However, I have not completely abandoned the traditional approach, such as using the Abakada. My method is still the same, but I incorporate multimedia or visuals through pictures." |
| “Ginagamit nating yung visual. Gumagamit din tayo ng multimedia through youtube diba? Dahil dito narerecognize o nareretain sa mga bata yung ginagawa nila. May ginagayahan sa tv through sounds, narerecognize or nareretain ito ganito pala yung sound ng letter.” | "We use visuals, and we also use multimedia through YouTube, right? It's beneficial because the children recognize and retain what they are doing. They have something to follow from the TV, and through sounds, the children recognize or retain how the letter sounds." |
| “Katulad nung nagkaroon tayo ng training and workshop tungkol sa learning activity sheets papasok yung arts duon sa visual, multimedia sariling gawa ni teacher ang drawing ang inilalagay sa activity sheets.” | "Just like when we had training and workshops about learning activity sheets, arts were integrated into the visuals and multimedia. The teacher creates their drawings to include in the activity sheets." |

Table 1 indicates that art integration enhances critical thinking, emotional growth, and engagement in learners with special needs (Becker, 2020; Gross, 2020). Methods like painting, collage, and music increase motivation and support learner-centered instruction (Caballero et al., 2023). Visual and tactile activities improve memory, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and reading fluency (Reisman & Severino, 2020; Becker, 2020). Challenges such as sensory sensitivities, multilingual confusion, and routine disruptions require adaptive strategies and consistent routines (Gerber et al., 2024; Gross, 2020). Visual aids and technology personalize learning (Caballero et al., 2023; Becker, 2020), with teacher flexibility crucial (Jabbour, 2023; Mgonja & Mwila, 2023). Overcoming systemic barriers demands ongoing professional development, inclusive curricula, and mentorship (Donath et al., 2023; Goddard et al., 2023) to optimize literacy outcomes.

**Problem 3. What key insights do special education teachers gain from using art integration in their literacy instruction practices?**

The study highlights the role of art integration in boosting motivation, engagement, and learner independence in special education. Flexible, individualized art-based methods increased participation and reduced behavioral issues. Multimedia tools enhanced attention, phonemic awareness, and retention, demonstrating the value of combining art and technology. Findings stress the need for teacher training in diverse, tech-enhanced strategies, aligning with literature on arts integration’s support for inclusive, differentiated instruction and holistic development in learners with special needs.

**Problem 4. What action plans can be developed based on the lived experiences, emerging themes, and insights of the special education teachers to improve literacy outcomes through art integration for learners with special needs?**

This action plan aims to enhance literacy in learners with special needs through arts integration by developing creative materials, optimizing lesson planning, and ensuring continuous teacher training. It prioritizes individualized, sensory-responsive activities to boost engagement and literacy while promoting collaboration among educators, parents, and specialists to foster inclusive and practical instruction.

.

**Table 2.** **Action Plan for Integrating Art into Literacy Instruction for Learners with Special Needs**

**(Queens Row Elementary School – Philippine Public School Setting)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Gap** | **Objectives** | **Key Strategies/**  **Intervention** | **Activities** | **Resources** | **Timeline** | **Evaluation and Monitoring** |
| 1. Lack of systematic approaches to integrating art into literacy instruction for learners with special needs. | -Identify effective strategies for art integration in literacy curriculum.  Explore individualized art-based activities supporting diverse special needs:  a. Enhance phonemic awareness  b.Improve vocabulary and word recognition  c.Develop reading fluency using multisensory techniques  d. Foster memory retention and comprehension  e. Build fine motor skills alongside literacy  f. Strengthen focus and engagement through routine  g. Manage sensory sensitivities to improve literacy.  h. Foster holistic literacy via multimedia. | -Develop tailored art-based literacy interventions for learners with special needs.  -Design a flexible curriculum integrating art-based strategies.  -Develop lesson plans incorporating hands-on visual, musical, dance, and multimedia activities.  -Apply learner-centered, localized themes to enhance literacy relevance and engagement. | - Implement a pilot "Art Thursdays" program to enhance literacy through art integration.  a. Letter Art Activities:  -Letter Collage  -Letter Formation  -Letter Hunt  b. Picture-Word Association: Match visual art cards with corresponding Tagalog and English words.    c. Song and Movement: Use letter-sound songs paired with hand actions or dances..  d. Story Visualization: Learners illustrate key story events or characters post-reading or listening.  e. Tracing, cutting, and pasting: Learners trace letters and assemble related images or objects.  f. Spinning wheel: Use a wheel with letter, sound, or vocabulary tasks.  g. Calming tactile art activities tailored to learner preferences.  h. Video lessons and digital storytelling enhance engagement through multimedia and interactivity. | -Materials may be adapted based on topic and availability.  a. Crayons, clay, beads, colored paper, glue, tracing sheets  b. Flashcards, visual aids, trapapel, printed real pictures  c. Simple action songs about literacy- reading lessons from YouTube or teacher-made videos  d. Picture storybooks with clipart/real images, drawing tools, tracing sheets, pencils, laminated pads, markers, and erasers.  e. Scissors, glue, crayons, and printed pictures (simple and specific illustrations/ or real pictures)  f.DIY spinning wheel, flashcards, printed pictures  g. Clay, colored papers, cotton balls, feathers, etc.  h.YouTube or Teacher-Made Video-Assisted Lesson | 1. Short-term (3-6 months): Pilot art literacy interventions.  2. Medium-term (6-12 months): Teacher trainings/workshops and evaluation of learners' progress. | 1. Assess the impact of art on literacy growth and engagement.  2. Assess learners’ literacy, reading, and engagement during art activities.  3. Monitor learner participation and adjust strategies based on feedback.  . |
| 2. Insufficient teacher preparedness and limited resources hinder the integration of art and technology in special education. | -Evaluate the readiness of special education teachers to use adaptive technology.  -Train special education teachers to effectively integrate art and technology in literacy instruction.  -Identify resource gaps in assistive technology for learners with special needs. | - Conduct training workshops on art integration and adaptive tools.  -Provide mentoring and peer-learning workshops.  -Provide inclusive tools and resources to support effective tech-based learning for diverse learners. | -Deliver hands-on training on visual scaffolding and adaptive multimedia techniques.  Conduct small-group discussions to exchange best practices and address challenges.  Provide classroom support to help special education teachers adapt technology for diverse learners. | -Training venues are equipped with essential materials and supplies.  -Printed and digital materials, including guides and online resources.  -Adaptive technology tools include speech-to-text software, assistive devices, interactive whiteboards/projectors, smart TVs, laptops, desktops, tablets, and microphones.  -Localized/Contextualized Learning Materials:  Teacher-made or DepEd-provided learning activity sheets, visual aids, flashcards, and interactive materials tailored to learners with special needs. | 1. Short-term (2-3 months): Initial training on assistive technology tools and classroom implementation.  2. Medium-term (6 months): Evaluate technology adoption and expand teacher training. | 1. Assess teacher and learner feedback on adaptive tool effectiveness.  2. Conduct pre- and post-training assessments of special education teachers’ proficiency.  3. Collect data on the frequency and ease of adaptive technology use in classrooms. |
| 3. Limited collaboration among parents, teachers, and specialists in creating individualized instruction for learners with special needs. | -Enhance parent-teacher collaboration in special education by consistently reminding parents about take-home literacy art activities.  -Develop a multidisciplinary collaboration model to improve individualized education plans (IEPs).  -Examine how ongoing collaboration affects the success of individualized learning plans. | -Implement regular parent-teacher meetings for conferences and joint planning.  -Enhance home-school connection by involving parents in ‘Art Thursdays’ through collaborative literacy activities with their children.  -Organize workshops or meetings to establish shared learning goals for learners. | -Schedule regular meetings with parents, teachers, and specialists to review IEP progress and resource needs.  -Distribute take-home literacy art activities to promote cooperation and align goals and interventions. | - In-person/online communication: venue, schedule, and logs (e.g., chats, Google Meet, Zoom).  -Templates for goal setting and progress tracking. | 1. Short-term (1–2 months): Hold initial meetings to set goals and develop the IEP.  2. Medium-term (4-6 months): Ongoing collaboration and feedback sessions. | 1. Assess IEP effectiveness and family satisfaction.  2. Conduct stakeholder surveys to evaluate the collaboration process. |

The action plan in Table 2 presents a learner-centered, arts-integrated literacy framework for Queens Row Elementary School, based on the experiences of SPED teachers. It aims to enhance phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and reading fluency using multisensory strategies such as music, visual arts, clay modeling, and dance. “Art Thursday,” a weekly session, promotes consistency and engagement. The plan emphasizes collaboration, teacher training, and the utilization of local materials, with progress monitored through assessments and parent-teacher logs, providing an inclusive and creative approach to literacy in special education.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that art integration significantly enhances literacy for learners with special needs by improving motivation, focus, memory, and engagement through the use of multisensory strategies, including visual arts, music, dance, and multimedia. It supports self-expression and emotional regulation but requires careful adaptation to learners' sensory and language needs. Challenges include limited structured programs, adaptive tools, and teacher training. The study emphasizes collaboration and recommends implementing the co-developed action plan, piloting inclusive strategies, and providing ongoing professional development to sustainably improve literacy outcomes.

Consent:

The author declares that ‘written informed consent was obtained from the patient (or other approved parties) for publication of this case report and accompanying images. A copy of the written consent is available for review by the Editorial office/Chief Editor/and Editorial Board members of this journal."

Ethical approval:

The author hereby declares that all experiments have been examined and approved by the appropriate ethics committee and have therefore been performed by the ethical standards laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki.”

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

Option 2:

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models, etc., have been used during the writing or editing of manuscripts. This explanation will include the name, version, model, and source of the generative AI technology, as well as all input prompts provided to the generative AI technology.

Details of the AI usage are given below:

1. The author utilized Grammarly to improve the grammatical flow and clarity of the research manuscript.

2.

3.

References

1) Al Dahhan, N. Z., Mesite, L., Feller, M. J., & Christodoulou, J. A. (2021). Identifying reading disabilities: a survey of practitioners. Learning Disability Quarterly, 44(4), 235-247.

2) Anderson, S. E., & Putman, R. S. (2020). Special education teachers’ experience, confidence, beliefs, and knowledge about integrating technology. Journal of special education technology, 35(1), 37-50

3)Amwiine, H. & Nnenna U. J. (2024). The future of art education: Integrating technology and traditional practices. Research Output Journal of Education 3(1):5-8, 2024. https://rojournals.org/roj-education/

4) Anderson, A., & Wendt, K. (2022). Arts as emancipatory pedagogy of the futures of education. Global Citizenship Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.globalcitizenshipfoundation.org/article/arts-as-emancipatory-pedagogy-of-the-futures-of-education>

5) Becker, P. A. (2020). Teaching language and literacy through the visual arts: An interdisciplinary, literature-based approach. Teaching exceptional children, 52(3), 166-179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059919894736>

6) Caballero, B., Catubay, A., Semilla, H., Pinili, L., Ancheta, J., Manalastas, R., Capuno, R., Manguilimotan, R., Etcuban, J., Padillo, G., & Espina, R. (2023). Teachers’ use of the arts on children with special needs: Its prevalence and importance. International Journal of Science and Management Studies (IJSMS), 191-203. <https://doi.org/10.51386/25815946/ijsms-v6i5p112>

7) Crispel, O., & Kasperski, R. (2021). The impact of teacher training in special education on the implementation of inclusion in mainstream classrooms. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 25(9), 1079-1090. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1600590>

8) DepEd Memorandum No. 001, S. 2024 (2024) Implementation of Catch-Up Fridays. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/DM_s2024_001.pdf>

9) Department of Education (DepEd). (2023). MATATAG Music and Arts Curriculum Guide. Republic of the Philippines, Department of Education.

10) Donath, J. L., Lüke, T., Graf, E., Tran, U. S., & Götz, T. (2023). Does professional development effectively support the implementation of inclusive education? A meta-analysis. Educational Psychology Review, 35(1), Article 30.

11) Education Alternatives (2021). The Importance of Art in Special Education <https://easchools.org/2021/04/20/the-importance-of-art-in-special-education/>

12) Gerber, B. L., Guay, D. M., & Burnette, J. (Eds.). (2024). Reaching and teaching students with special needs through art. Taylor & Francis. <https://tinyurl.com/2024GerberGuayBurnette>

13) Goddard, Y. L., Ammirante, L., & Jin, N. (2023). A Thematic Review of Current Literature Examining Evidence-Based Practices and Inclusion. Education Sciences, 13(1), 38. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13010038>

14) Goldberg, M. (2021). Arts integration: Teaching subject matter through the arts in multicultural settings. Routledge.

15) Gross, K. M. (2020). Visual arts content literacy: A partnership between art educators and special educators. Teaching Exceptional Children, 52(3), 157-165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059919894269>

16) Heiman, A. (2020). Benefits of arts integration: rationale and recommendations for arts integration in academic coursework. online submission. ED618694.pdf

17) Jabbour, R. (2023). Educational benefits of art integration for students with disabilities. University of Rochester.

18) Kennedy E, Castanelli DJ, Molloy E, Bearman M. Addressing positionality in qualitative research: Significance, challenges and strategies. Clin Teach. 2024; 21(6):e13820. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.13820>

19) Lee, L., & Ho, H.-J. (2023). Engagement with music technology in special educational settings for children with disabilities. Engineering Proceedings, 55(1), 27. <https://doi.org/10.3390/engproc2023055027>

20) Lou, X., & Huang, J. (2024). The application of computer-aided music and art in preschool education of disability and health integration. Journal of Computational Methods in Sciences and Engineering, 24(6), 3878-3891. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14727978241299635>

21) Mareza, L., Mustadi, A., & Dewi, D. S. E. (2024). Arts education for children with disabilities: A systematic literature review. Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.1667>

22) Mgonja , E. E., & Mwila , P. M. (2023). Special Needs Education Teachers: Their Roles in the Learning Process of Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Secondary Schools in Dar es Salaam City, Tanzania. Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies, 42(3), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2023/v42i3919

23) National Art Education Association (NAEA). (2021). Position Statement on Arts Integration. Retrieved from <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/how-to/arts-integration-beta/what-is-arts-integration-beta.aspx>

24) National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) (2024). The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Philippines. Global Platform for Cultural Networks. <https://gpdnet.org/cultural-hub/exhibitions/the-national-commission-for-culture-and-the-arts-ncca-philippines/>

25) Pavlou, V. (2020). Art technology integration: digital storytelling as a transformative pedagogy in primary education. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 39(1), 195-210. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12254>

26) Prajapati, S., & Kuma, N. (2024). Art-Integrated Learning (AIL): An Effective Learning Approach for 21st-Century Learners. SPAST Reports, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.69848/sreports.v1i1.4774>

27) Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) (2018). School participation of children with disability: the case of san remigio and mandaue city, cebu, Philippines <https://situationofchildren.org/latest-evidence/all-reports/publication/school-participation-children-disability-case-san-remigio>

28) Reisman, F., & Severino, L. (2020). Using creativity to address dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia: Assessments and techniques. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003038313>

29) Rugmai, T. (2021). The process of creating a work of art from sensory integration of students with intellectual disabilities of the Panyanukul Schools in Eastern Thailand. Journal of Urban Culture Research, 22, 195-216.

30) Samsudin, M. R., Sulaiman, R., Tarmizi, M. S. H. A., Zahari, S. S., Roslan, N. F., Alias, S. (2025). Innovative pedagogical frameworks for creative arts: a critical review of cross-disciplinary methods. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 2454-6186. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.9010015>

31) Saunders, J.N. (2021) The power of the arts in learning and the curriculum: a review of research literature. Curriculum Perspectives 41, 93–100). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-021-00138-4>

32) Shouma, M. (2020). The impact of arts integration on the learning and social abilities of students with disabilities: an approach to an inclusive classroom (Doctoral dissertation, The British University in Dubai). <https://bspace.buid.ac.ae/buid_server/api/core/bitstreams/65dd89b5-56dd-44ac-9875-867e77d1c0c9/content>

33) UNESCO. (2021). A framework for culture and arts education. UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377481>

34) WU, H. H., & Teixeira, V. S. (2024). Case Study on Art-Based Intervention with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Macau. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-4408241/v1