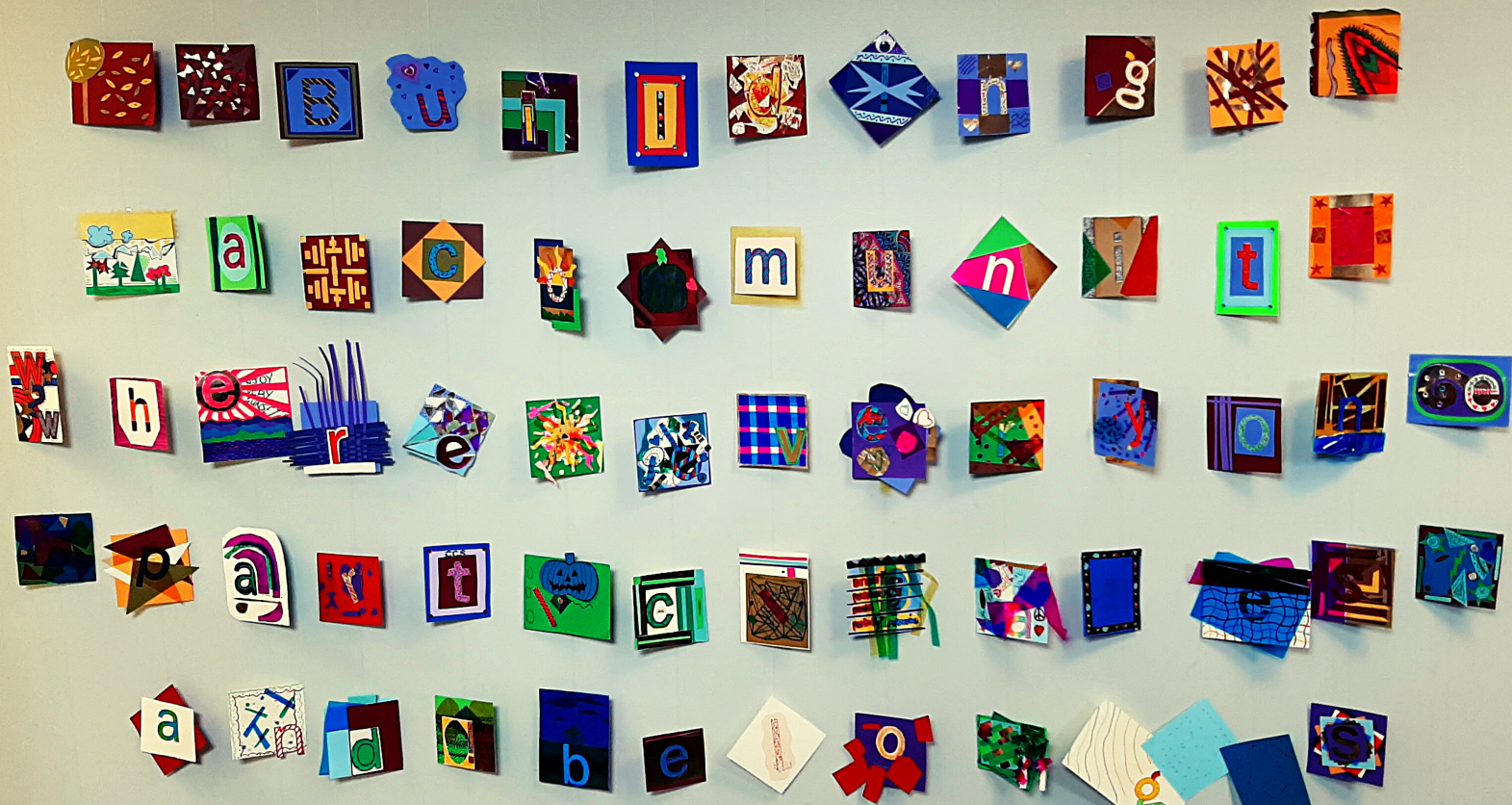




inclusive arts vermont

We use the magic of the arts to engage the capabilities and enhance the confidence of children and adults with disabilities.



**IMPACT REPORT
2020-2021**



A NOTE FROM KATIE

Last week our annual staff retreat began with an aerial dance class. We were stretching, and the teaching artist told us about the two-minute stretch theory, which states that when stretching a muscle, it takes two minutes for your body to become acclimated with the sensations. It takes time for the initial shock of the stretch to wear off. After that time, we can push the stretch just a small amount further, going beyond our normal comfort zone.

As I attempted to fold my body further forward than I am accustomed to, it occurred to me that this was what the past year had been like at Inclusive Arts Vermont. We had stretched to our limits in 2020, but in 2021, learned just what the organization and its people were capable of. The staff continued to lean into the not-knowing, experimenting and finding a new path for our work. We had already leaned into the unknowns of 2020, and were pushing just a bit further, dreaming a bit bigger in 2021.

This past year has been one of more growth and change. I remain so incredibly proud of our team of dedicated staff and teaching artists. They continue to meet the needs of our community and feed the creativity of Vermonters with disabilities. They adapt, mold, and remold their work to fit into an ever-changing world.

I am so grateful to our participants, partners, and volunteers who continue to support our work. We truly could not do what we do without you. I look forward to what's in store for 2022 and am delighted to share this report, filled with highlights and beautiful stories from the past year.

KATIE MILLER

Executive Director

Staff & Board Retreat, Fall 2021



stories

**"When the art started, the stress melted away,
and then there was joy."**

-Teacher, Collaborative Integrated Arts Residency



Teaching Artist Melissa Sallée spent the year with students at OnTOP, an alternative program in Burlington School District, as part of the Collaborative Integrated Arts Residencies. Melissa shared a reflection on the impact of the work on the community and students:

"Projects like these that make ample room for self-expression and are centered around a group mission, ultimately intended to connect with their larger community, allow for students to be a gift to their communities. This project captures the critical work we have to do, which is **finding a framework of empowerment for people who too often have experienced feelings of disempowerment.**"



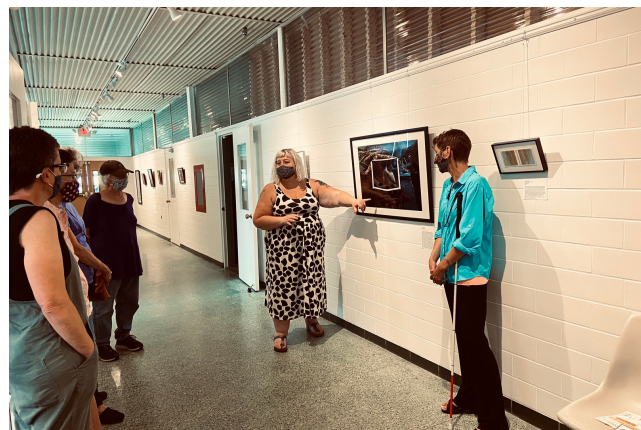
"The students communicated with pride examples of how they had overcome anger and anxiety. One student stopped himself from losing his brand new, first job. He did precisely the practice we discussed in class, that we can let a stressful situation play out, ask for a moment away, process the event when we are not reacting to the event."

A collaborating teacher shared their observation on the impact the residency had on students, sharing, "One student is on the verge of graduating. He has a new job and has actively used the social and emotional learning lessons combined with body consciousness, to keep his job that is his path to a better, safer life. **Life-changing stuff.**"

stories

"It has been incredibly validating and inspiring to be part of this artistic community. These exhibits bring us together, celebrate the strength of our creativity, and empower us."

-Karen Lloyd, exhibiting artist



In the moments before the global pandemic shut down our state, we installed the ANEW exhibition, featuring 29 pieces of artwork by Vermont artists with disabilities, only to take it down less than two month later. We adapted and worked with the artists to create vibrant opportunities for connection and artistic exposure, breathing new life and a sense of possibility into ANEW.

How did we do it?

- **The exhibition was available in digital format:** artwork, artist statements, bios, verbal descriptions both written and recorded, and other access features.
- **We held monthly digital artist talks** on Facebook Live, where artists could share their work, their vision and creative process, and engage in conversations around disability in the arts. **The artist talks were viewed by over 2,000 people**, and provided a safe platform for artists to gain exposure and build awareness of their art when it couldn't be hung on public walls.

- **We began holding bimonthly virtual ANEW artist networking sessions**, where artists were invited to connect, chat, share works in progress, ask for advice on the business side of artmaking, and build community among fellow exhibiting artists.
- The exhibition was able to show at two in-person sites, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in October 2020-April 2021 and the T. W. Wood Gallery in May-July of 2021. Between these two venues, **38,000 people were able to experience this exhibit in person.**

Artist Jean Cherouny shared that being part of the exhibition and artist talks provided support and creative connection during the pandemic: "This exhibition is creating community and connection. Isolation and challenge increased during this time, but **this exhibition created an ongoing dialogue about process and creativity and embracing our true creative selves as we pushed together through isolation.**"

stories

"We're utilizing books in new ways, interfacing with the arts more than before. Children are resilient; we continue to learn from them as we continue to teach them."

-Start With The Arts Participant



We piloted Start With The Arts for Families in Summer 2020 in response to the pandemic and to support the increased children learning at home with caregivers. For years parents have asked about Start With The Arts, asking for an option for families engaging in learning at home. The pandemic presented a unique moment to meet this need. **Over the course of 2020-21 we held five sessions of the program, serving 33 families and 52 children. This program has been an oasis of learning, creativity, educational modeling, and community building for families at home.**

One parent shared, "Milo loved seeing Peggy and her bear every week. It was so fun to look forward to receiving the books and materials in the mail, and anticipating getting to do something new together each week. Even though I'm a creative person, **I learned so much about simple ways to extend Milo's engagement in reading.**"

Another parent shared, "We participated and loved it so much. **My daughter really opened up and missed 'her friends on the computer' when it was over.** We discovered new books and art mediums to utilize with our toddler."

And yet another told us, "I loved this! Really lovely program, which **really enriched my daughter's immersion in art and literature.**"

Families were able to engage from the comfort, safety, and convenience of their own homes, while engaging in rich and tested educational practices, discovering new interests and techniques, and becoming part of a shared creative community.

stories

"I have a better understanding of ableism and disability, and the confidence to be able to have conversations about that so we can continue to learn and grow in our work."

-Access Series Participant



As the world moved to virtual meetings and programs, we became acutely aware that many folks out there needed and wanted training on how to make their digital content more accessible.

Katie weighed in on this issue in article in SevenDays: "Streaming has eliminated transportation barriers and been hugely beneficial to immunocompromised individuals, but **technological challenges can be greater for people who live with disabilities. There are many things about the online space that are inherently inaccessible. It is almost an entirely visual world.**"

Out of this need, Inclusive Arts Vermont created professional development offerings: **"Introduction to Verbal Description: The Art of Using Words for Access"** and a **six-part interactive series combining workshops and 1:1 consultation, "Accessibility: From Awareness to Action."**

The verbal description workshop trained participants in how to use written or spoken language to convey visual information. The Access Series created a space for organizations and individuals to explore accessibility and work through how to challenge ableist practices and policies, instead prioritizing accessibility and inclusion from the start.

One series participant shared, "It's easy to think of accessibility in terms of things like wheelchair ramps and physical structures. But so much of our lives revolves around technology. **Realizing how many accessibility needs there are around technology was really illuminating.**"

Another shared, "I have an understanding now that it's a lifelong journey. **I'm coming away from this feeling less overwhelmed and having the understanding that it's one step at a time.** We're going to move forward, and we know where to get the answers to questions that could arise as we evolve."

And we are so grateful to be that resource for folks, working together to make Vermont more equitable and accessible for Vermonters with and without disabilities.

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2020-21

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"Art making is so needed in these isolating times. So much is negative and scary we need positive offerings like these."

-Residency Teacher

Inclusive Arts Vermont Management Team

Katie Miller, Executive Director

Peggy Rainville, Director of Early Childhood Programs

Kat Redniss, Director of Communications & Development

Heidi Swevens, Director of Community Partnerships

Alexandra Turner, Director of School & Community Programs



Our Year By the Numbers

Total Participants: 42,281

Total Adults Participants: 41,579

Total Youth Participants: 702

Total Programs: 146

Total Virtual Programs: 118

Total In-Person Programs: 28