**Inclusive Art Vermont**

**Art Access Summit**

**March 28, 2023**

**Inclusive Teaching Methods**

**KAT REDNISS:** First of all, thank you, everyone, for being with us here today and for this rich conversation. Learning, dialogue, and just all the energy and consideration that's being held in the space with everyone. We are now at our probably most interactive session, which is our Inclusive Teaching Methods section. And we have two presenters who are near and dear to my heart. These are folks we work with all the time, Alexandra Turner is the Director of School and Community Programs for Inclusive Arts Vermont. She is also just a dynamic teaching artist, integrated arts specialist, advocate for the arts. She's an artist herself, as a dancer, glass blower, in so many ways. And she is here with Melissa Sallee, who is just such a phenomenally talented and kindhearted human. The two of these people are just going to hold you and take such good care of you. Melissa has done work from the youngers learners, to working with veterans after they've been in service and in battle, using the arts as a way, therapeutic model, and a way to engage community. The two of these folks at their deepest core believe in the power of the arts to connect, to heal, to inspire, to join, to just expose folks to joy, to discover, and it's an honor to have them here. Melissa is a teaching artist in our arts residency program. She's also supported us with professional development opportunities, and has been, you know, part of our relationship at the Boston Dance Alliance, and so excited for what these two are going to bring you regarding inclusive teaching methods. So, I'll hand it over to both of you.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Great, thanks so much, Kat. That was very grand, indeed. My name is Alexandra Turner. Very access purposes I'll do my verbal description. I am a light-skinned woman with freckles, blue eyes, curlyish shoulder-length brown hair. Today I'm wearing a dark green sweater, fuchsia scarf, and sparkling dangly earrings in front of a blue wall with a photograph of a boat on it. Like at the corner of that blue wall, wooden shelving with all my cookbooks.

And I am just so, so happy to be here. I just want to give shoutout to all the speakers so far. I'm the one that wrote I'm fan girling, I can't believe I'm presenting at the same place as Jeff, and Aurora, and karen, and Jen White-Johnson. It's just been such an amazing day so far.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** I'm going to turn it over to Melissa to introduce herself.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Good afternoon. This is Melissa Sallee here. Yeah, thank you, Kat, for the introduction. And Alexandra for your partnership in this portion. My visual description. I am a middle-aged very fair skinned woman sitting in a light blue top in front of a rice paper kind of room divider, just hoping that I can keep it simple as you're looking at me. I'm excited to be digging into this topic of inclusive teaching methods, because there's so many little pieces, the nuances, that matter so much that we'll model and discuss. But I think the best thing about being inclusive is that it can reach even those that aren't sure yet if they want to be included. That there's ways to build bridges even if they are not going to be used right in that moment. So, let's dig in. And I'm excited to have it be movement kind of thing. Let's do it.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Okay. I'm going to start. If you haven't yet, find yourself if you want to do visual arts, drawing materials, modeling clay, some pipe cleaners, also feel free to do, you know, spontaneous photography with your cell phone, create a dance, create a poem, whatever works for you today.

We're going to start that in just a moment. First, I'm going to say I'm doing some screen sharing, so right now we have sort of our introductory slide. It's blue, has the Inclusive Arts Vermont logo. And the title of this presentation, "Inclusive Teaching Methods," the date today, our names, Inclusive Arts Vermont website, and our Inclusive Arts Vermont I don't know if it's our mission statement, part of our mission statement, "using the magic of the arts to engage the capabilities and enhance the confidence of children and adults with disabilities."

And next is just a reminder to take good care of yourselves as we go through this process. Feel free to eat, drink, move around, stay still. If you are comfortable to do so, we would really like you to keep your cameras on for this session, because we are going to be creating together in sort of a collaborative process and sharing our artwork if you want to. If you can, put your cameras on. Make sure you, again, take care of your body, and this is a picture, this slide has a picture of a glass of water, kind of water dropping into it to remind us to take care of ourselves.

Plan for the day. We did our introductions. We're going to have a little doodle warm up, and then a co-creation improvisation art making. We're going to reflect, both practice a way of reflecting with participants about their art. We're going to do that with each other. And then sort of pull out and identify adaptations for inclusion. And then have a good, luscious amount of time at the end for questions and takeaways.

So, we're going to start with this doodle warmup, and I'm going to turn it over to Melissa to lead you on our little warmup.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Thank you in advance for really entering the space with being playful. So, I'm a big fan of doodling, because I feel it's really approachable. So, what I'd like us to do is to use the first letter. I'm going to be reading a bit from our slide here. This is still a blue slide saying we're going to do a doodle warmup for five minutes, and we're going to use the first letter of your first name. And we're going to take that letter and doodle it all over the paper, or you could sculpt it, you can have your body make the letter. Whatever feels right, right now, understanding that this is about just exploring kind of the experience of it. Not about what it's going to be like in the end. All process based.

So, whatever you'd like to do, you work with it. And we're just going to start. So, as you're doing that, initial, your first initial, and you don't even need to look at the paper. You could start to play with it like write it like you normally would. And then try to change up if you are doing it where you're writing it, change the scale, or if you're using your body to make the letter, make it larger. It can become really geometric or small. Kind of let the letter take on its own life. And I need to do it now, too. Not just talk. I'm just noticing how I used my last initial of my last name, and I'm saying it out loud, because that is this process. So, I flipped my page over to switch to my first name, first initial.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Melissa, how long do we have for this, another minute or so?

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Yeah, sounds about right, about one minute. Which is cool for all of us, because we didn't set an expectation about how many of these letters we would be doing. You know there's a minute left, go ahead and pause when you feel it's the right time to pause. Hopefully it was not stressful. That's the idea making a doodle, doing a frame, easy to keep creating with. So, Alexandra, should we move on to the second stage of this warmup?

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** So, now we have this next slide which has this sort of verbal written directions. For the next part, Melissa is also going to talk us through it, but what we're going to do is create a word bank together. And I have a slide coming up next where we're going to record it, so we're going to invite people, once Melissa gives the prompts, you can say your word out loud, type it in the chat, but this is where we need to all come together and give us some words.

MELISSA SALLEE: So, reading from the slide, we have co-creation improv. We're going to be taking about 15 minutes for this portion. So, understand that means that if you want to sit with it for a bit before you get going, there's time for that. We're going to create a word bank together. The theme is going to be the seasons changing. Pick someone else's word from the word bank. After we collect these words, we're basically going to swap inspiration. So, someone else's word will be what we build on. We're going to use that word as inspiration to add to your work. It can be literal, abstract, letter forms, something that works for you.

So, by using co-creation, the ideas that we're moving away from having an idea about what we want to create. And we're letting it evolve naturally. By introducing someone else's word, we don't have to stress about what are we going to make. So, Alexandra, let's go ahead. Take a second, everyone, and think about how the seasons are changing. I'd like to add that this kind of creation doesn't mean that we have to be necessarily positive. It doesn't need to be about rainbows and flowers, though it can be. I think it's important when we talk about inclusive practices to realize that maybe we are thinking about the mud or the extra duties that we're going to have to do with the changing of the season, whether it's for work or our home, or maybe discomfort in our body when the weather changes and things hurt more than usual. So, please feel free to use whatever words feel honest. Excellent, thanks, I feel them already popping into the chat box.

And I also really want to mention really, truly, please feel free to pass. You can simply pluck a word that someone else has put into the chat box that we've collected. If you want to take a pass and not even do this doodling exercise, you don't have to.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Getting stress, transformation, bloom, sunshine, boots, mud, muddy, crunch, muck. I'm going to have a hard time typing and saying it out loud. Feel free also to unmute yourselves and say them out loud.

**KAT REDNISS:** Do you want me to read them? I can read them from there.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** That would be great.

**KAT REDNISS:** Rebirth. Color. New. Muck. Refresh. Ocean. Equinox, exploration. Migration s that on there? Warmth, muddy. Boots. Sunshine. You got that one. Bloom. Great. Growth.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Excellent. I want to make sure that we take a moment. So, if you feel like you're still cooking and trying to think of a word and want to contribute it, let's just take one more second here. Looks like a really hearty word bank. Alexandra, thank you for collecting the words and putting them on the screen. Please let us know at any point if you'd like us to reread the list. Feel free to stray from the list. It's such a wonderful thing when we can aid each other in this kind of improv process. Taking pressure off being creative.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Let me double check the chat. Okay, I'm going to put this back into presentation mode so the words are bigger again. And we have one more time, trust, transformation, thaw, bloom, sunshine, mud, ocean, equinox, rebirth, color, new, muck, refresh, exploration, migration, warmth, muddy, and growth.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Excellent. All right, so, the idea for this is that you have something near you, a paper, your body, sculpture, music, whatever it may be. You have something that you just did these initials with, your first initial. So, you can use those as like the skeletal system. You can have that be your framework. And then take one of these words or maybe a couple of them and infuse them into that doodle you already have.

So, for me, I'm looking at a page of very quickly written out M's, varying degrees of messy sculptural. And I may make those Ms into a mountain that has water coming down it that's going to turn into a muddy road. Whatever it may be. All you need to do is enjoy the experience with it. And, please, pop in with any questions in the chat box, or unmute. We're here.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** So, your invitation for the next tenish minutes is to take a word, someone else's word, and use it to inspire the next phase of your art making. And Melissa and I are here with making space along with you. Reminder there's no right or wrong way to do this. This art is for you. You'll have an opportunity to show it to others. But you won't have to do that if you don't want to.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Alexandra, I'm thinking it might be nice a little bit if we move from the slide to it being each other, when the time is right, if we've had time to access those words.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** I think I'll do that now. These words are also in the chat. I was just finding myself scrolling through all the faces, too, and looking at everybody's beautiful foreheads as they lean down to make their work or their bodies moving in the space.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** One of the nice things about what doodling can offer is because it's such a low risk situation, that sometimes we feel a little bit more comfortable being nearer to each other, because we're not feeling protective of what we're trying to create, because we don't have that end goal. It's just for nothing. It can go in the rubbish, the trash, recycling when we're done, and allowing for that to be just ephemeral, I think, it's a comfort with being closer to each other. And kind of closer to ourselves, which I think why so many of us maybe doodle when we're thinking or listening.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** I'm adding the word ephemeral. What a good spring word.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** So, we're just using this as a practice also. Even though it's just a doodle and we may share it together. If you get done with it, or you want to begin again, this practice is here for you. It's here to support you. So, if you would like to get rid of the paper or the way that you're approaching this activity, it's here for you to just begin again.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Thanks for that reminder, Melissa. I am going to start again now.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Good, I'm glad. That's why I said. I'm sincere. Because all of these practices are meant to just be a cycle of trying, frustration, something feeling right, beginning again, seeing what we want to take with us on the next iteration. I notice that when I'm doodling, too, I enjoy kind of the sensation of pausing, I guess, of negative space, of not feeling like I need to keep going. Remembering that it's just there. This is my little extra outlet. So, you can leave space in this, too.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** I think we have something in the range of four more minutes to create. Does that sound right, Melissa?

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Looking for us, yeah, that does sound about right. Just a couple minutes. A quick reminder, too, as you're doodling, if you're enjoying it, that you can keep going. We are going to take some time to be able to share with each other, but if you're enjoying this process, and we continue talking in this session, please feel free to keep doodling. I would have given anything for my high school teachers to have that position, but we do. So, feel free. You'll be able to continue it if you want.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** In the last minute or so I want to remind you that as you're doodling or making, you might be focusing on what it is that you're creating. You might be focusing on how it is feeling to create it. Maybe that's the physical tactile sensation. Maybe it's how it sounds. The materials you're using. Maybe it's thinking about the different meanings of the word that you chose. There's no right or wrong way to enter and continue this process. Giggling, because I saw Heidi's cat just decided to join her process. She's got pipe cleaners, cat is like that's my material, that's my medium. We'll take another 30 seconds to bring yourself to a place to pause for now.

And in the Zoom space, especially if we're creating visual arts, sometimes we like to do a little everybody share. So, I'm going to invite us to do that, if you want to. It's totally an invitation. If you wrote a poem or you wrote a song, or you don't want to have your camera on, no worries. But if you have a piece of visual art that you are willing to just hold up for a moment so we can kind of see the mosaic of what people have shared, we can do that now. I will do some verbal descriptions.

Oh, okay, we've got black line drawings on white paper in a spiral bound book. What looks like smudgy oil pastels. We've got a curvy line, black line drawing with some words. We've got very tiny little black line drawings. And we've got some bold red geometric lines. We've got black line drawings with color added in. Let's see what else we've got. Little flower type images, maybe some people. I've got this  I ended up doodling with a series of postit notes that I folded into some shape. I saw some people moving their bodies. All different ways of making art. So, thank you so much for sharing.

The next 15ish minutes we're going to spend inviting you to practice a way... I feel like Jeff set us up so perfectly for this. Invite us to share about our art and share our art with each other in a really supportive way. So, I'm going to just do a quick screen share and show you all some of the attitudes and approaches that at Inclusive Arts Vermont we use in our teaching practice. It's a way of talking with our participants, with people about art. And we use this in galleries about the work of others, and we use this in classrooms about the work that our students are creating. And the first slide is just blue, it says "talking with people about art." And it's a reminder that as the instructors in the room, whatever that means, whatever instructor means in that moment, we have a lot of power. And we want to invite ourselves and each other to use it, to encourage creativity, problem solving, independence, and self-esteem. And I might just revise that to interdependence, as appropriate. So, here's some of our kind of reminders and things that we teach, are teaching artists to use. The idea that we approach the art and the person with respect and curiosity. We invite people to use observation of the evidence. So, describing what you perceive about the art. Asking questions about the product that the person created. Ask questions about the process. So... oops, sorry. I'm hand talking to myself and just switched the slide. Ask questions about the process. So, how did you create this, or who was the most fun part, or what was the most challenging part. You might ask questions about the meaning of the art. What does this mean for you, or what was this like for you to create this artwork. You might ask questions about what comes next in the process for the artist. What are they thinking about is the next step. If it makes  shoot, I did it again  makes sense to do so, acknowledge growth, struggle, challenge, or effort of the artist. And we're going to invite people to leave out the opinions, the judgments, the value statements. The "I like it." We're going to find other ways to authentically engage with the art.

So, whoever our beautiful access doula, if you could copy and paste that text into the chat. I should have told you this ahead of time. But we're going to send people to breakout rooms. And I realize there are lots of you that have your cameras off and sometimes going to breakout rooms if you're in an I'm keeping my camera off space can feel like not what you want to do. Either if you want to stay in this space because you don't want to go to a breakout room, you're welcome to stay in this space.

If you have using the services of ASL or captioning, stay in this space, the captioners and the ASL folks will stay in this space also. And otherwise, I'm going to invite us to take tenish minutes in your breakout rooms to practice sharing your art and using those approaches of curiosity and respect and genuine noticing of the work to think about that process and that product that you just created.

Do people have questions before you go?

**KAT REDNISS:** There's one question. Can we still participate if we're staying in this room? Absolutely. We just wanted to make sure anybody that needed to access the open captioning or ASL will stay in this room. And if you're in this room, even if you're not using that, it will also be that same conversation.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Also, just as a reminder, whichever space you're in, if you're sharing visual art, if you could please do a verbal description, if that feels new to you, that's okay. This is a great space to practice and try things out. And explore together.

**MEGAN:** This is Megan. I'm about to create the breakout rooms. You should get an invitation to join the breakout room. If you want to stay in this main room, especially for accessibility, just ignore the invitation. Okay. And we're here for any questions as they pop up. All right, thanks.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Welcome back to the big room. I trust you all had nice conversations about the doodle exercise. All right.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Welcome back, everybody. I always love breakout rooms for the chance to talk individually, but hate breakout rooms because they always end with somebody mid sentence. I'm always like what were you going to say? I hope in that short amount of time you were able to find interesting connections or get to practice some of those ways of talking about art.

Melissa, sorry, do you want to say

**MELISSA SALLEE:** No, that's great. You were on track.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Great. Okay. So, somebody is finishing their thought in the chat. Hi, Julie, boots in the mud. I love that so much.

Okay, so, we're going to take the next little bit to, you know, Melissa and I just provided you with a very short little encapsulated version of some inclusive teaching practices, and we want to invite everybody to kind of sort of zoom out a little bit. And what did you notice in the... what did you notice in terms of inclusive teaching practices? Melissa, do you think I should screen share or just we can just chat?

**MELISSA SALLEE:** I think my gut feeling is we're ready to chat. I don't know. Can we do a thumbs up, crew? Yeah, all right. Chat style.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** We're going to invite you, unmute, say it out loud, or share in the chat and one of us will read it out. What are some of the inclusive teaching practices that you notice that Melissa and I modeled for our group today?

>> I like that you started with the doodle that was your initial. I'm just thinking even from a young age, it's sort of our identity in a way is our name, and spelling our name, and even if we only get the first initial of our name when we're really little, that that's  I just remember my nephew, you know, seeing a big "A" for Adam. He was like 18 months or something, you know, at the store, the store marquee had an "A" in it and he spotted it, you know. And, so, I just thought that was really great. And I run a program, a theater program, for people with disabilities, and we've been doing a lot of art, especially in the pandemic on Zoom. And it just was  this is just a really fun thing, because pretty much everybody can make one letter of their name, so it's a great starting point. I like that.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Great, I heard there starting with a doodle, that sort of personal connection to identity, and fun. Not to be overlooked. You had a hand?

**JADIAN:** Hi, it's Jadian. I noticed that in our kind of reflection space, that  I'm so sorry, there's a phone in the background. That asking what the other person wanted to hear about feedback about their piece, I feel like that's such an important part, kind of not only because I feel like it makes it less of like a transactional experience and more like together, but also as an artist. That's so helpful. Given that space, I come in with questions, and getting feedback on that, I think is kind of like pinpointing and allowing the growth to happen as an artist, which is really wonderful.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Great. I want to just acknowledge we tried to put the things in the chat so they'd go with you to breakout rooms, and that didn't happen, at least in ours, so I apologize in that. One thing we did in our breakout room is provide the artist with some feedback and ask is there anything in particular you're looking for feedback on any parts of it you don't want to be asked about it or want to have us talk about?

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Excellent.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Other things people noticed in inclusive practice in this session?

**KAT REDNISS:** I appreciated. This is Kat. I appreciated that the language you use, you often instead of do this, you said I invite you to do this. So there was an invitation into the process. I think, you know, part of that is it's so welcoming. And it also reduces, you know, the sense of obligatory or you must or that kind of topdown type of mentality of I am instructing you to do something. I think I had a different response to the start of the letter because I'm not a visual artist, and I think sometimes because I'm not or because it's not where my comfort is being creative, I get so caught up in an end result and perfection and all of that. So, the freedom to just have a given kind of prompt allowed me to actually open my mind and say, okay, I can export the shape of this, the size of this, I can just do it. And I was not thinking about the end result of it and was able to release some of my own kind of fear around visual arts.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Great, so, an easy starting place that gave you some freedom to explore.

**KAT REDNISS:** Yes, absolutely.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Thank you. Other things people noticed? There's, again, not right and wrong answers. What you notice is important and valid.

**GABLE:** This is Gable. I have short brown hair, red shirt on, and my background has a bunch of stuff in it, mostly a white wall, though. One thing that I noticed was how a little bit hard for me to open up my mind from the structure of what I'm expecting, like make an art piece about this thing versus saying, okay, just doodle, start to draw. Very different from the structure of education and the school system of artbased a lot of the time, so, I found it good to kind of rethink that kind of thing.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Thank you.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Maybe I could share something from me being a participant in my breakout room. Even though I know what I'm aiming for, what I was able to identify, because I was in such a supportive room number three breakout room, I was able to say how hard it was for me to doodle and still think about the quality of me presenting in this program. And that I found myself kind of caught between, Melissa, just do Ms on the paper, you can definitely do that and do this presentation. And so what kind of bubbled up for me, what emerged, was that something that I know and I'm always reminded by, either me doing something, a student, or whom ever, that art can also be a vehicle. It doesn't mean it's not an end result, but it can also be a vehicle. And by us having that breakout room talking about our doodle, we are also able to talk about the things that were going on internally. And be able to connect as people because we had something to be able to unify us in that moment. This micro shared experience, and if it stressed us out, it still brought us something to be able to share that as we shared the art.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Even though I am a visual artist, I often get stressed when I ask myself to make art, because I'm like the art lady, I have to be able to do the thing. So once you said you could let go, two minutes before the end, you can let go of the original thing. Oh, thank goodness, even though I know that because I'm also presenting, I made something different. I had a postit note with scribbled As, highlighter, marker, pen. I really don't like that. It's not my happy place. So I took a whole bunch of other postit notes that were a mess on my table, and I started folding them and thinking about turning a new leaf, turning a new page, turning a new leaf, turning a new page. Springtime. So, booya, people. Thank you for that time.

I want to do a screen share real quick, Melissa, because we do have sort of the Inclusive Arts Vermont framework. And still if any of you have things that you're still thinking about or bubbling up for you, say them out loud, put them in the chat. This is not me presenting again. This is me giving us some visual cues and verbal cues about our stuff. Hold on, I'm trying to navigate things on Zoom. Slide show.

So, we have this slide that says identify the inclusive practices. Oftentimes we have... when we do these things in person, we can share with you cool adaptive visual art materials or music making materials. So I just included one picture of young artists at work at a table. It's like a gray table with some black paper, white paper, and there's different sizes of pencils. There's different types of scissors, including loop scissors, kids are cutting, gluing, tearing, to make some high contrast collages.

So, some of the inclusive practices that we were aiming to model for you today, I have a quote from the wonderful, amazing, Heidi Swevens. "Creating a space that's safe to explore in an atmosphere of possibility." Then we have some bullet points that include creating a space that feels safe, safety, emotional, and physical. Inclusivity of all abilities, all states of mind or habits of being, all culture, all identities.

We have the idea of curiosity and openness. We have the idea of process over product. In our... most of the work that we do in community and schools, we teach our teaching artists about unconditional positive regard, which is the idea that what you do in my classroom space or community space together, whatever you make or create has no bearing on how wonderful I think you are as a person and your worth as a person.

We talk about people and about their art with curiosity and respect. Oops. Geez, I keep doing that. And we have an attitude of can do, or why not?

We provide options for materials, and we couldn't provide you with materials today, because we're on Zoom, but we invited you to bring your own options for making with variable arts, with music, with your body, with poetry, with whatever you've got. This slide includes an image of, again, some young artists, some of them are sitting at a table painting, some are standing at the table. There's one artist on the floor sort of drawing a big peach in yellow and black eye on the floor. So, just the idea that we can make art with spaces spread out, we can use variety and choice as inclusive practices.

And then we have a slide that has a little person with a giant question mark, and a hand holding a clear sphere that's reflecting the sort of sunset and lake behind it. And this is our time for... do we still have time? We still have 15 luscious minutes, Melissa. Get it. 20 minutes at the end.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Everybody, you need to understand, when we were meeting to plan for this, we just need to preserve this time at the end, because the best stuff happens at the end and we're always running out of time at the end. And you are the ones that really matter right now way more than we do. So, we want to be here for this. And I know it can be awkward. We're on the Zoom screen, if you've been here since the beginning, it's getting long maybe. Let me also, this might be a good moment to bring in a little bit of the ideas that I really care about regarding inclusion, which is there are people who don't want to be included. And maybe they do, but they don't know how. They are not ready for that invitation. It was mentioned in the beginning that I do work with veterans, veterans who have physical disabilities and veterans that do really live with PTSD. And I also work at therapeutic schools, and I make space for students to encounter their expressive art time if they are hiding under their desk, if I need to bring them their art material when they are in an isolation room, or in the bathroom. Sometimes I slide things under the door. Sometimes when they go to make art, it can appear like it's violent, or we have to be concerned about it. I just want to speak to this idea that inclusion doesn't necessarily mean it's one... you know, we imagine it as being this one circle. We want to bring everybody into it. I think it's so important for inclusion to be portable. And like I said earlier, we're building bridges that may not be used in that moment, but it matters so much that we build those bridges so that when it feels right for that individual, they don't have as far to go. That they know that we'll be there. That even if we don't get it right, we don't use the right words, the right tools, we're doing an activity they don't want to do, our intention of letting them know we do want them to be near if they want to be near. We want to give them space, belonging, all of those things. It's just about that trust. And I think that that's, to me, I just wanted to make sure to share, that for inclusion, it is a beautifully large thing, and there isn't one way to do it. And just being in that mindset that that's your intention is like you're way ahead, that's wonderful, and keep reaching out. I look forward to this conversation. Please feel free to ask questions even if you don't have them perfectly formed. Please just pop in and let's talk about it.

**KAT REDNISS:** There is somebody who's wondering about some resources to share with other educators. And then also just speaking about the language of invitation.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** I don't know if that sort of list in that slide... we have some handouts on talking to participants about art. I don't know if those are on our resource page, but we can send those out to people or make sure they are on our [resource page](https://www.inclusiveartsvermont.org/resources/).

**MELISSA SALLEE:** That would be great. Do you want me to speak a little bit?

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** That would be great, yeah.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** You want to talk about the language of invitation?

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Are you asking me to or saying you want to?

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Either way is find with me. I invite you to go ahead if you like.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Why don't you go first, Melissa.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** I think it's really what Gable was mentioning earlier, to me. The idea of an invitation, saying that I love this thing to happen, I love to let you know that you are going to be supported in this invitation. But that there is no pushing, and there is no pulling in it. And it leaves space for really complete autonomy. That's the thing. So, the invitation is about meeting people where they are.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Yeah, thank you, Melissa. I think both Melissa and I and actually a lot of our teaching are working in schools or community settings in which  well, I guess I'll start with schools. In schools for the most part the kids haven't necessarily chosen to be there. They haven't necessarily chosen to be at the art table with us. And there's so much about their lives that they are not able to have choice about. My intention and my goal as a teaching artist coming into that space is to  I use the word invite again, but to invite genuine participation. I think it's really important for us as educators or people in educational spaces or in community spaces to remember that compliance isn't the goal. Making sure that kids do a thing and check off the box that they, like, did their art time and they made some marks on a paper or whatever. What does that actually get anybody? So, if the way that students or people in the space need to participate that day, as Melissa said, under their desk, or in another space, or right at the table right next to me. All of those are fine ways to be included and fine ways to be in the space. And I think what we're trying to do is radical, and it is changing school systems, and it's changing the way that people are approaching education. Because I think our education systems are so set up to be compliance focused and product focused. So, even if it's in my little one-hour or half an hour with students, if I can give them that one half of an hour to get to make choices, even if the choice is I'm not doing that today, I think it's a really important and valuable experience.

I also think, too, that's what we do as artists. Artists get to discern, make choices, edit, keep working, or throw something away. So, we're teaching valuable artistic skills also.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** I would like to just emphasize, this is Melissa speaking again. For so many folks, the most important thing they get to do that day may really actually be saying no to your invitation. And that's a precious moment. We all know what it's like to be in these systems where it is about compliance and to have just the breath of fresh air for someone to say  sometimes it has been my work. Would you like to draw in this group activity? No, I genuinely just don't feel it today. We deserve that. We deserve that, and us being able to say that can sometimes be the difference so that the next time we do feel like we can say yes, because we've had known to be honored. To me that's the power of being an invitation. To be honest, how can we have it any other way? We are separate human beings inviting each other into these interactions.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Thank you. Other thoughts or questions that are bubbling up for people? Darlene?

**DARLENE:** Well, I'll just jump off of what Melissa just said. My son Elijah has cerebral palsy. He's almost 30 now, but we've done a lot of different therapies over the years. And when he was little, one person said no comes before yes. So that was just interesting. And as a teacher to remember that even when they say no, there's a lot about observing, just being in the room, just being there, having the space to take things in as you need. Just a good reminder to us. And that's where we all started as infants. We said no before we said yes. Verbally and nonverbally.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Thanks, Darlene. What else, what are people taking away, what are you thinking about? What are you wondering? Or what was this experience like for you? We didn't get a chance to really have a whole group about what did you  how was it to go through the process today, this artistic process?

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Let me pop on, too. I am happy to be quiet, team. I'm happy to be quiet, but  so, you can push me out and say something, but inclusion is just such a large topic that I think it might be hard for us to just be in conversation about it. You know, certainly, we're developing in this segment of the summit, we're talking about inclusion, art inclusion, and this kind of way. But I think we can also discuss it in larger ways. Maybe even if you're thinking about how to come into this conversation right now, you could think about times that you have been included in a way that you felt was authentic, and then other times where you really felt excluded when the intention was to even include, and you still felt like it was too elusive. And those are interesting liminal spaces about this idea of inclusion. So, I know this in my own life very, very well. I came into the arts by way of a car accident. So, I had a spinal cord injury and a traumatic brain injury. I came into the arts in a way where they, you know, it was long enough ago where inclusion wasn't something that was a standard that people believed in. So, just I felt inside and outside circles my whole life, like all of us have. So, if that helps you to think about inclusion right now in this kind of community, kind of context, that might help. When have you felt included where someone built that bridge that you eventually used, or when did you feel that bridge didn't show up and you could have used it? What made a difference? That might help.

**KAT REDNISS:** We're in that quiet afternoon time. I think people are taking a lot of information from the day, and thank you all for participating. Yeah, but give it a moment, yeah, go ahead, Alexandra.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** I was going to say somebody put in the chat a link to our resources page. Obviously, Melissa said something like inclusion is a big topic, it's huge. We have 70 minutes, so, so tiny. Even if we had 70 days, it would still feel like probably wasn't enough. But on our  I want to invite you to take a look at the resources page on our website. If you scroll down, there's a section that's specifically for teaching artists, and it has some of the things that we didn't cover today, like adapting art materials for different people with disabilities for different needs. There's a link to the Kennedy Center website about arts integration. There's a link to the National Core Standards for Inclusion. There's a whole bunch of resources on working with seniors and elder care, creative aging, things like that. And there's a whole bunch of links to resources for social emotional learning. So, we have found over especially the last few years, that so much of the inclusion work that we're doing, so much of the arts integration, where residencies were inclusive arts based residencies, they were like arts integrated with a core curriculum subject in the art with a side of social emotional learning. Now it's arts integrating with social emotional learning with maybe a side of some core content in an inclusive framework. So, we're doing a lot of social emotional work, and I just wanted to see what was in the chat, too. Take a look at our resources.

Okay, interesting.

**NIKITA:** Can I just say this was super... I have two sons, one who struggled with health issues his whole life and has been excluded from everything his entire life. Right up  he graduated last year from high school and never experienced a lot because he was excluded. And now I have my younger son, who has struggled emotional disturbance, and I am still... he's a sophomore, and almost April, and I'm still fighting for an IEP for my son. Hearing there is hope, because he's so excluded, so. His 16th birthday is on the 20th, and he's never had a birthday party because he's never been included in so much that kids just think he's... I don't know what they think he is. We'll talk to you in public but don't want to be seen with you in private, because there's something weird about you. It's nice to hear there's hope.

**ALEXANDRA TURNER:** Thank you, Nikita, so sorry to hear about that struggle.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Nikita, thank you. That's vulnerable to share that. This issue of belonging and being seen for what we are, there is hope, but it sounds like it can't come fast enough. And I will just  I think with even all of us here that are gathered, if we can take these practices in the smallest of ways into the circles that we are, they will make a difference. They will make an immediate difference, because it just takes one time of someone saying we're here, we're here, I see you. So, honestly, I hope that this kind of idea of inclusion can resonate deeply, even in you and find ways to do it at home and on your neighborhood block and all of that. Thank you for sharing with us.

>> Just blows my mind that me as an educator at my level with preschool... there's nobody that's not included. There's nothing that can't be included. There's nothing that we can't alter to make so everybody's part of it. Why it's so difficult at that level to be inclusive, and why they are not held to the same standard as I am. It's mind blowing for me that I never in a million years would think about excluding a child or anybody. For any reason. It really does blow my mind at this level I'm held to a higher standard and that I hold myself to a higher standard as an educator to never let a child feel like this.

**MELISSA SALLEE:** Yeah.

**KAT REDNISS:** Hi, folks. We're at the end of our time here. Nikita, thank you so much for sharing that. You know, and I know that vulnerability and frustration, that frustration is real, and that authentic frustration is so real. That's why we do the work we do, that's why we're on here with the folks doing what they are doing. Just a couple things in the chat. Question about the alignment of this with forest therapy guiding and Alexandra responded with universal design for learning is a way that's connected. Troy shared a great resource, Design for Belonging, so that's in the chat, as well. We'll also make sure to put that in our followup email. Constructivism, and universal design for learning, humans first approach, strengths based approaches, these are the foundations that a lot of this is built on. Unconditional positive regard, mindfulness.

I want to thank our presenters, Melissa and Alexandra, thank you both so much for this. We went over a little bit. We want to give everybody a few minutes. We'll start at 4:03 for considerations for accessible programming. For that, we really want it to be... we have several questions that you put in registration, so thank you for that, that we're going to explore. And Jeff is going to be back with us to talk a bit more about trauma-informed practice, as well. So, we'll meet back in ten minutes, and we'll engage with some considerations for accessible programming. Thanks so much, folks.