Using Visual Arts to Promote Awareness of Mental Health among Middle School Students

CCPH Conference Houston, Saturday April 21, 8:30-10:00 AM

Presenters:

- Ilana Reisz, PhD, Collaborative for Children, Project Director South Region Children’s Mental Health Collaborative
- Jane Hamilton, LCSW, MPH, Doctoral Candidate, University of Texas School of Public Health
- Rhonda Radford Adams, RDH Co-Founder/Program Director, Museum of Cultural Arts Houston (MOCAH)/Art Angels Healing Arts Program
- Woodson Leadership Academy in Houston, represented by 7th Grade students

Goals:

1. To demonstrate the use of an expressive arts project in public schools as a vehicle to address the stigma associated with mental health conditions and to promote positive mental health
2. To give middle school students a platform for sharing their experience with developing competencies through participation in a community-based awareness project
3. To involve conference participants in an exercise that will illustrate the power of using community-based art engagement to express sensitive topics

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain how the creative activity breaks through stigma surrounding mental health conditions that contribute to health disparities
2. Demonstrate how middle-school students participating in community-based art project use it to express sensitive topics
3. Highlight the important role youth play in initiating dialogue about self-expression and emotional wellbeing

Mental Health: Definition

A state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity. It is indispensable to personal well-being, family and interpersonal relationships, and contribution to community or society.

**Workshop Outline**

**MODULE 1: THE BROADER CONTEXT – Ilana Reisz**

South Region Children’s Mental Health Collaborative History:

- Organizational Structures and Funding
- Purpose and Model of Service Delivery
- The Community We Serve

**MODULE 2: PUBLIC HEALTH CONTEXT – Jane Hamilton**

- Mental Health and the Arts
- Arts Disparities and Social Justice Concerns
- Addressing Stigma and Focusing on Wellness

**MODULE 3: LOCAL PERSPECTIVE – Rhonda Adams**

- MOCAH History- Art in the Community
- The Art of Leadership
- Selected Methods: Fractal Geometry and Color Selections

**MODULE 4: THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE – Participants and Students from Woodson**

- Participants’ Project Mentored by Woodson Leadership Academy Students
- Meditative and Observant Roles
- Gallery Walk

**MODULE 5: FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION**

- Observations and Experiences
- Ideas to Take Home
Using Visual Arts to Promote Awareness of Mental Health Among Middle School Students

CCPH Conference Presentation, Houston TX, April 21, 2012

Ilana Reisz, PhD
Project Director, SRCMHC
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Collaborative for Children (CC)
A non-profit organization focused on building a strong educational foundation for children to succeed in school and life.

College Bound from Birth (CBfB)
A Program of CC
To help young children succeed by improving the quality of child care programs, investing in families and reducing barriers to health care in the Sunnyside/South Park neighborhood.

South Region Children’s Mental Health Collaborative (SRCMHC)
A collaborative of 5 private/public agencies, funded by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, to promote children’s mental health in south region of Houston.
An integrated network of services to promote mental health for children and their families

*promotion - prevention - treatment*

- **Community Partners:** local child care providers, child care centers, Schools in 4 feeder patterns (Pre-K to 12th Grade), churches and community centers
- **Values:** community-based, child-centered, family driven, culturally competent approaches
- **Foundation for Service:** communication and integration, Evaluation and Adaptability
The Community We Serve

The South Region (a geographic designation) of multiple neighborhoods (8 zip codes) served by 4 high schools and their respective feeder schools (Midyear-3 Report).

- Population over 150,000
- About 35% are children 0-19
- African Americans -59% overall (uneven distribution)
- Latinos -30% (uneven distribution)

We served children at all ages. Children 0-18 comprised 42% of the total clients registered who identified their ages.

Of the clients reporting annual house-hold incomes, 77% reported less than $40,000 (down from 86% at end of year-2).

SRCMHC Client Population

Female 77%.
African American 75%
Latino 20%
Caucasian 7% and Other 11%
Neighborhood Resources

- Multiple Churches throughout
- Civic Clubs
- Political representation
- 2 Federally Qualified Health Centers
- 1 City Health Department (prevention)
- 1 County Health Department Clinics (primary health)
- 2 Community Centers
- 2 Libraries
- Social Services and non-profits involvement
- A growing presence of small businesses
- One supermarket and two drug stores
Identified Social Justice Concerns

- Few opportunities for quality early child care
- Low reading levels
- High disciplinary rates in schools
- Low graduation rates
- Underutilization of health services
- Employment and upward mobility concerns
- Inadequate local voice – lack of cohesion
- Stigma attached to addressing mental health concerns
- Significant barriers to mental health services (except for SRCMHC)
Family Engagement
  PAT – Parents As Teachers, PPE – Practical Parenting Education

Early Childhood Improvement
  Mental Health Specialist working with child care teachers

Navigation and Case Management services
  Connecting families to resources

Counseling Support

Psychiatric Assessments and Medication Management

Pilot Art’s-Based Awareness Program
  Collaboration and Communication
## SRCMHC SERVICE AND FUNCTION COMPONENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th>Intervention/ Treatment</th>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC – PAT – In home services. Parent meetings</td>
<td>FSGH – Community-based &amp; School-based Counseling</td>
<td>HDHHS – Kid’s Village - Navigation</td>
<td>CC – Coordination</td>
<td>CC – Project Management</td>
<td>UTSPH – Analysis of PSAT, dataTRAQ and SDQ, Project Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC – PPE- school and community – based parent education sessions</td>
<td>FSGH – Adolescent boys group therapy sessions</td>
<td>HDHHS – Kid’s Village - Case Management</td>
<td>CC – MOCAH- Arts-based school programs</td>
<td>All – Record - Keeping</td>
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<td>CC - Mental Health Specialist – Child Care teachers ‘ support</td>
<td>UTDPBS – Psychiatric Assessment and Medication Management</td>
<td>SOH – Case Management</td>
<td>HDHHS-Kid’s Village- Family Liaison</td>
<td>All- Communication</td>
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<td>HDHHS – Kid’s Village family education</td>
<td>SOH – Intake Coordination</td>
<td>All partners– Community Engagement</td>
<td>CC- Voucher Program Management</td>
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<td>FSGH – parent group education</td>
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**Shared Assets:** SRCMHC Fliers and Posters; Intake phone number

January 2012

**Legend:**
- Family or individual activity
- Shared Group activity
- Community-based
Use of Expressive Art Activities to Promote Positive Mental Health Among Children and Youth
A Public Health Perspective

Jane Hamilton, LCSW, MPH,
PhD Candidate Health Policy
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School of Public Health
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Mental Health and the Arts

The integration of expressive arts into the mental health field emerged in the United States and United Kingdom in the 1940s.

Through drawing, painting, collage, and sculpture, individuals explore and express emotions, thoughts, memories, and ideas in a safe and non-directive way.
Prevention and Wellness

The public health concept of community wellness shifts focus from mental illness and curative outcomes to community level indicators related to positive health and wellbeing.

Expressive arts projects used to promote mental health can:
- assist in breaking down barriers of stigma;
- enable earlier recognition of mental health symptoms;
- lead to increased mental health help-seeking.
The Role of Art in Reducing Stigma

Stigma remains a major barrier to mental health help seeking in many communities.

Expressive arts projects used to address stigma can:
• empower withdrawn individuals to engage;
• convey personal experiences with mental illness;
• create a forum for community dialogues about mental health.
Social and Emotional Wellness in Public Schools

Children and youth at risk of mental, emotional, and behavioral issues can benefit from participation in school-based expressive arts projects.

School-Based Expressive Arts Projects:

- facilitate the expression of feelings and emotions;
- provide an alternative to written language for expressing sensitive topics;
- open the door to cooperation and collaboration;
- encourage parent involvement.
Engaging in Expressive Arts Promotes Resilience

Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from illness, change, or misfortune; buoyancy.

Factors found to foster resilience in children can be reinforced through expressive arts projects:

• Positive Relationships with Caring Adults
• Problem-Solving Skills and Thinking Ability
• Self-Regulation Skills
• Achievement and Motivation
• Positive Peer Relationships
• Belief that Life Has Meaning
Educational Achievement Gap Shown to Close When Disadvantaged Youth Participate in the Arts

Children and youth from low socioeconomic status (SES) families tend to do less well in school than students from more affluent families.

New research funded by the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) has found that children and youth from the bottom quarter of SES levels who engage in intensive art experiences are more likely to have educational performance at or above the general population.

In this report, lead author James Catterall, PhD, includes findings from four national longitudinal studies.
Art Expression and Community Development

Expressive arts projects offer multiple benefits including:

- Making strategic use of local resources including extended families, local businesses, community display areas
- Building sustainability by leaving behind social networks, art exhibits, community pride
- Increased sensitivity to culturally appropriate and intergenerational relationships
- Providing children and youth with a participatory voice in the community
Art Disparities and Social Justice

Many children and youth in the Houston South Region do not have regular access to art classes and museums resulting in social and cultural exclusion.

A key social justice concern is the barriers to opportunities for children and youth to access experiences that are beneficial for social and emotional development—opportunities which are a normal part of development for children and youth in more affluent neighborhoods of Houston.
The 19 Art and Cultural Institutions in the Houston Museum District are not Easily Accessible for many South Region Children and Youth
In the South Region, a core question is how or by what (e.g. actors/systems/processes) does exclusion occur and what consequences result, and what does it mean to be included?
“Arts and culture play a vital role in helping to create more just and vibrant societies. They inspire innovation and imagination, encourage civic dialogue and reflect the rich diversity of our nation's changing demographics. Many communities, particularly in times of economic downturn, lack affordable facilities where artists and arts organizations can incubate and produce creative works and engage more widely with the public.”        Ford Foundation, 2012
Art Angels Healing Arts Program
MOCAH History

Reginald C. Adams & Rhonda Radford Adams
Co-Founders

MOCAH is a exempt 501(c) (3) cultural arts organization co-founded in 1999 by artists, Reginald and Rhonda Adams.

The evolution of the Museum of Cultural Arts, Houston began from the founders' vision to create an arts institution without walls, an organization that will go to the people who are unable to come to it.
MOCAH Mission

Our mission is to use public art and creativity as tools for social awareness and community development.

MOCAH Purpose

Encourage creative awareness and the appreciation of art and cultural diversity through community participation and involvement in the arts.
Art Angels
Healing Arts Network

Mission
Art Angels Healing Arts Network promotes social wellness through volunteerism and creative philanthropy.

Purpose
Since 1999, our health based outreach program uses art as a tool to nurture individual and social health and wellness to support groups, healthcare facilities and schools.
“The Art of Leadership” is a community based art project that uses expressive art as a tool to promote emotional wellness to 30 sixth and seventh grade students attending Woodson’s K-8 Leadership Academy. Central to the school’s curriculum is direct instruction and preparation in becoming a leader.
The Art of Leadership project is designed to complement this existing curriculum by providing expressive arts workshops using the art mediums of mandala art (fractal geometry) and creative writing.
These mediums are used as a means to introduce children to coping mechanism for mental health. The activities are designed to support young people by exposing them to this art form that brings focus to establishing and recognizing patterns in their day to day lives among community, school, friends and family members.
By creatively recognizing life patterns, students gain the opportunity to build, strengthen and implement stronger decision making skills which is at the core of creating ‘Great Leaders’.
Art Builds Relationships
Art Develops Life Skills

Teamwork
Self-awareness
Communication
Innovation
Art Inspires

- Creativity
- Confidence
- Wellbeing
- Leadership
Face to Face at Worthing High School
CCPH Conference Skill Building Session: Using Visual Arts to Promote Awareness Of Mental Health Among Middle School Students

References


Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, Eliminating Barriers for Learning; Social and Emotional Factors that Enhance Secondary Education, SAMHSA Pub. No. P040478M. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2004.

