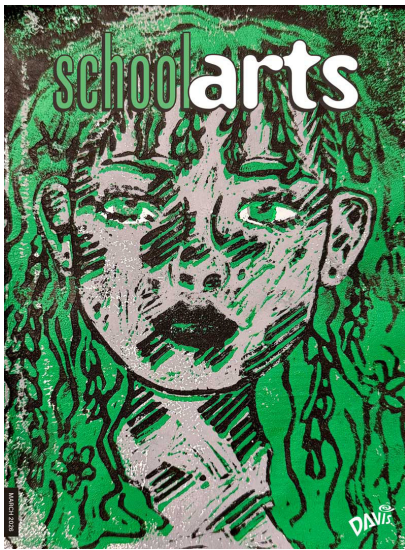




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Buddy Crafts: Making Inclusion the Focus



Students with ceramic poppies created for veterans.

An inclusive curriculum brings students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers together to collaborate as equals.

Karen Rosenburg

At New Hope-Solebury High School in New Hope, Pennsylvania, a new art class is redefining what inclusion can look like. Buddy Crafts is an art course open to all students, but specifically designed with students with disabilities in mind.

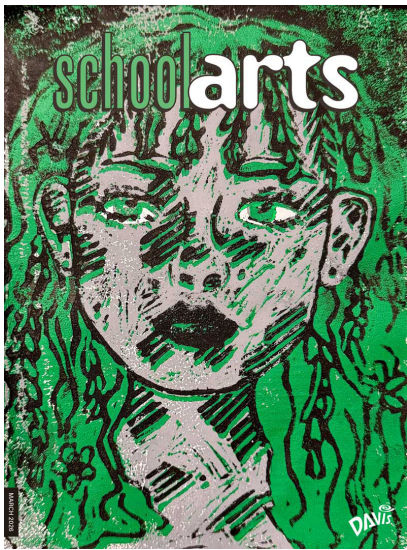
From Adaptation to Intention

As an art teacher, I always seek to make my classes inclusive for students with disabilities through research, presentations and conversations with other educators about best practices. Many of these conversations center around including students with disabilities in a curriculum designed for non-disabled students. I began to wonder: What if, instead of adapting a traditional art class for students with disabilities, we build one from the ground up for them—and then include their non-disabled peers?

Designing Buddy Crafts

That question became the foundation of Buddy Crafts. The goal was to design a curriculum that is 100% accessible to students with disabilities, while also offering meaningful participation for students without disabilities.

To make this a true inclusion experience, we invited non-disabled students to join the class as “buddies.” Their role isn’t to do the work for their partner, but to provide guidance by helping with directions, locating materials, modeling steps, and encouraging independence.



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A movable, interactive art piece created in collaboration with Mikayla's Voice.

Bridging the Gap

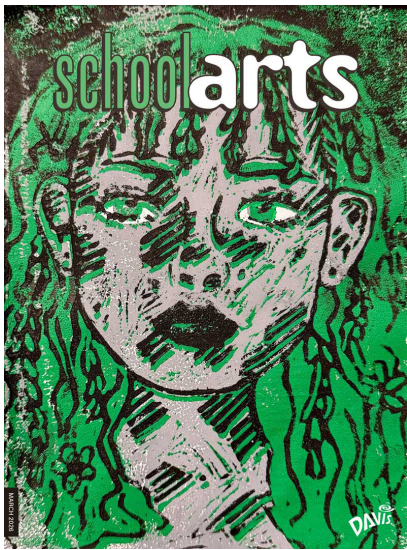
New Hope-Solebury is a small but high-achieving district, known for its rigorous academics and numerous AP and honors options. However, few electives suited students in the Intensive Learning Support (ILS) classroom—students who spend more than 20% of their day in special education and also receive instruction in life skills. Buddy Crafts was designed to bridge that gap.

Learning Together

The class pairs students from the ILS program with non-disabled peers and other students with disabilities who are fully included in general education. Together, they learn practical life and artistic skills through hands-on projects.

The goal was to design a curriculum that is 100% accessible to students with disabilities, while also offering meaningful participation for students without disabilities.

One of the most successful projects has been the creation of a handmade candle business. Students conducted customer research, selected scents, and hand-poured candles, sometimes into ceramic containers they made themselves. They designed labels and marketing materials using Canva and Adobe Express, created commercials with iMovie and CapCut, and sold their products to faculty and students. They handled every step of the process—from packaging and delivery to collecting payment. Profits from the candle sales went toward purchasing new materials for future projects.



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A hand-poured candle and ceramic container made for students' candle business.

Real-World Impact

Beyond business skills, Buddy Crafts emphasizes creativity and community service.

Students have:

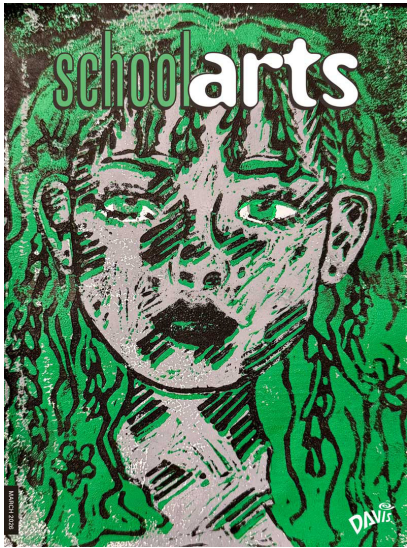
- made ceramic poppies to present to veterans at the district's annual Veterans Day ceremony.
- partnered with the local library to design ceramic sculptures of native wildlife for a children's garden.
- created collaborative large-scale paintings for display in the school's podcast studio.
- worked with Mikayla's Voice, a local organization that visits schools to promote inclusion of disabled students. (The organization hosted a school-wide assembly on inclusion and worked with the class to create collaborative and interactive art. Students can change the design of the artwork by moving canvases around on the wall.)
- made their own handmade sketchbooks—learning tie-dye, embroidery, and basic bookbinding along the way.



Collaborative, large-scale paintings created for the school's podcast studio.

Confidence and Connection

Because of Buddy Crafts, students who struggled with these complex projects were able to rely on their peers rather than always turning to teachers or paraprofessionals. The result was not just successful artwork, but growing confidence, independence, and friendships.



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One student from the ILS class even launched a podcast called *What's for Dinner?* Each week, they interview peers about their favorite meals and food memories. The podcast, published on Spotify, quickly became a school favorite.



The school's podcast studio setup, where a student from the Intensive Learning Support classroom hosts the podcast What's for Dinner?

Inclusion as the Foundation

Buddy Crafts attracts a diverse group of students: those interested in education or art careers, students who enjoy project-based learning, and those with personal connections to people with disabilities. Together, they've built a space where inclusion isn't an adaptation—it's the foundation.

Karen Rosenburg is an art educator with thirty years of experience. She holds a BS in Art Education from Kutztown University and an MA in Art Education with an emphasis in Special Populations from Moore College of Art & Design. She teaches in the New Hope-Solebury School District in New Hope, Pennsylvania. Her honors include the Pennsylvania Art Education Association's Outstanding Special Needs Art Educator Award (2018), the NAEA, CEC, VSA Peter J. Geisser Special Needs Art Educator Award (2019), and the NAEA Larry Marone Memorial Grant Award (2020). krosenburg@nhsd.org