

Fostering Friendships Through Meaningful Engagement with the Arts

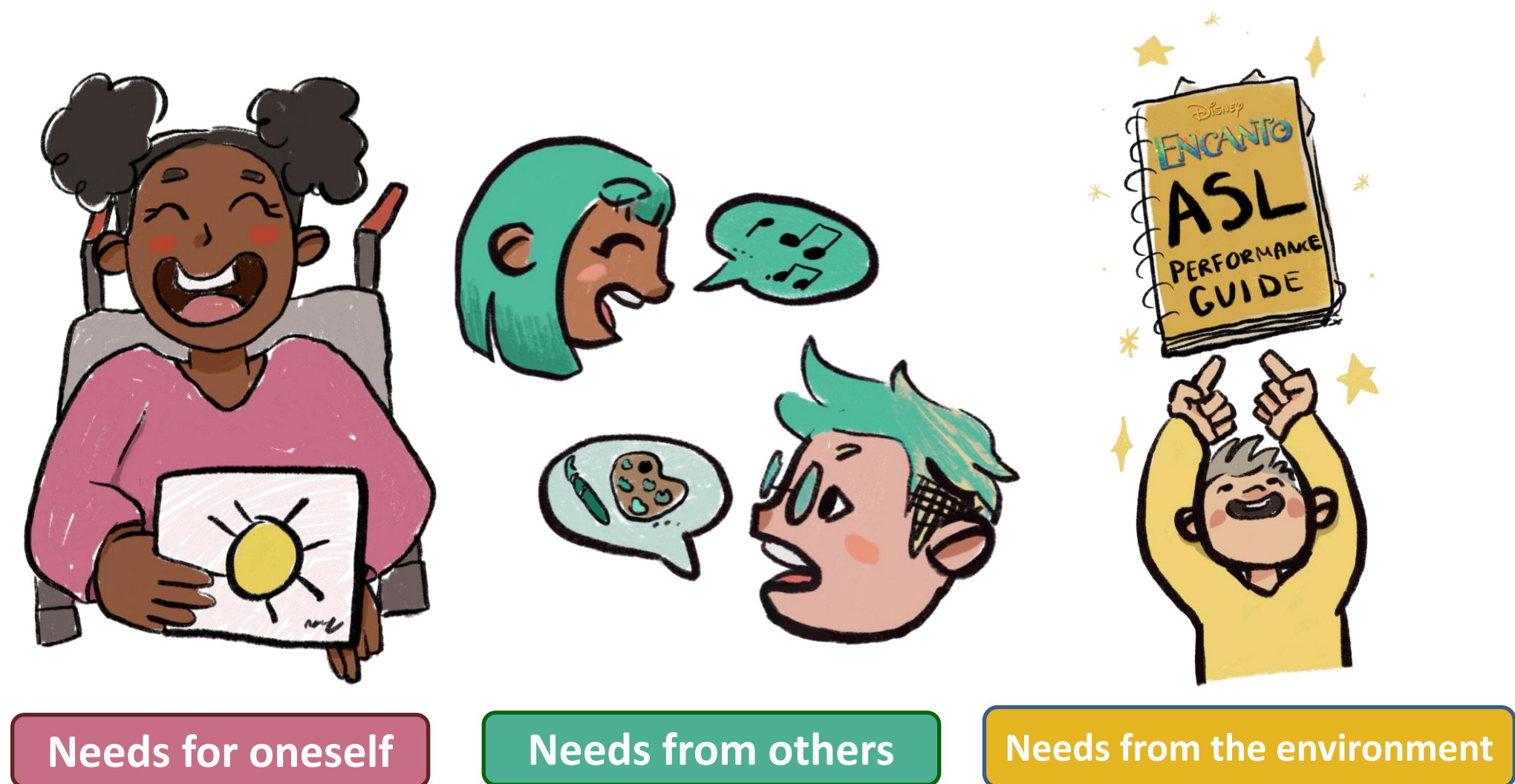
Wedderburn, B.^{A,B}, Smart, E.^A, King, G.^A

^ABloorview Research Institute, Holland Bloorview; ^BDepartment of Psychology, University of Toronto

Background

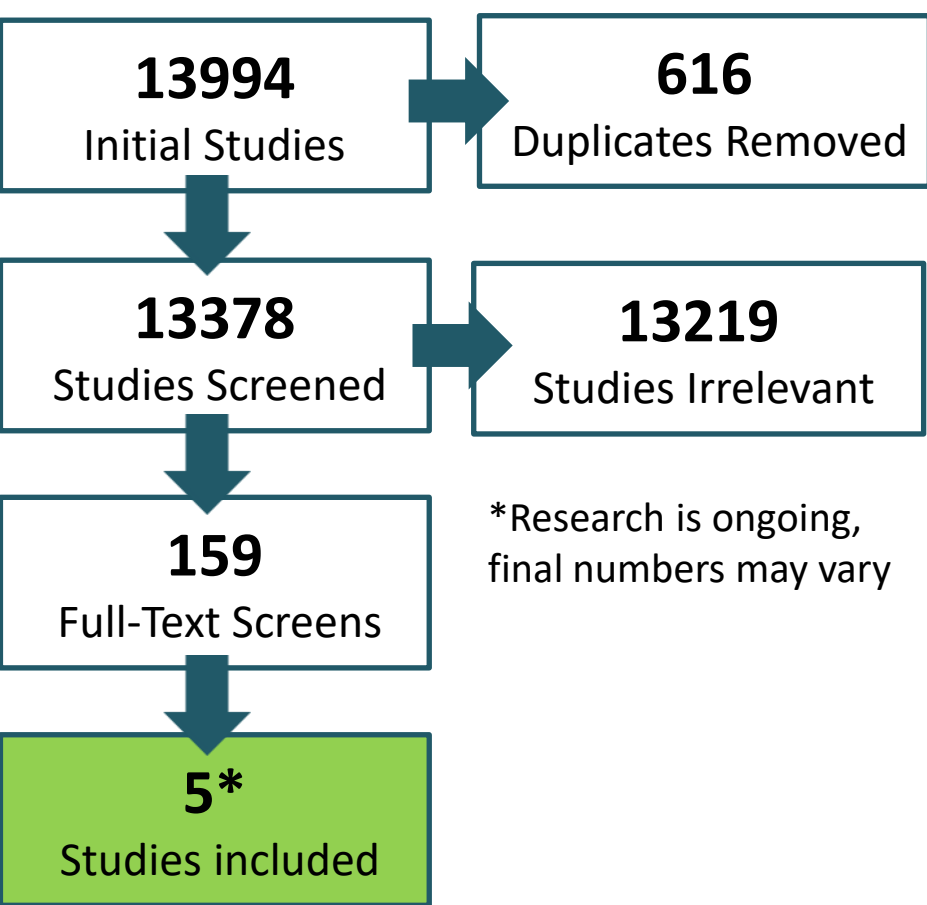
- Social connectedness is a well-known determinant of health.²
- Children and youth with disabilities (CYwD) experience more social exclusion than their peers without disability.³
- The arts have potential to facilitate friendships, however research on this is lacking.

Our goal is to explore how the arts meet **three essential needs** that we identified as **foundational** to friendship development:



Research Question

How does arts-based programming facilitate friendships for children by meeting three essential needs?



Methods

- Scoping review
- Search of five databases
- Keywords included “Arts-Based Programming”, “Disability”, “Friendship” and related terms

The arts are an accessible way to facilitate friendships while promoting overall health and wellbeing.



Scan me to learn more about the importance of friendships!

Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

References

¹Draper, A. R. (2022). Music Education for Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder in a Full-Inclusion Context. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 70(2), 132–155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00224294211042833>

²Lauris, C. L., Rojas, D. O., Shelton, T., & Tucker, A. (2017). *Friendships: Building a good life*. The PEAL Center and the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.

³Sentenac, M., Gavin, A., Arnaud, C., Molcho, M., Godeau, E., & Gabhainn, S. N. (2011). Victims of Bullying Among Students With a Disability or Chronic Illness and Their Peers: A Cross-National Study Between Ireland and France. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 48(5), 461–466. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2010.07.031>

⁴Wu, J., Chen, K., Ma, Y., & Vomočilová, J. (2020). Early intervention for children with intellectual and developmental disability using drama therapy techniques. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 109, 104689. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104689>

What we are learning

The arts meet CYwD needs for **oneself** by creatively encouraging self expression, meaningful participation, and exploration of one's identity.^{1,4}

I know who I am, and what I have to offer.



I'm free to talk in a way that works for me.

The arts meet CYwD needs from **others** by allowing children to engage with peers in diverse ways, while providing opportunities to connect and be accepted.^{1,4}

The arts meet CYwD needs from **the environment** by being an accessible and easily adaptable medium to accommodate diverse needs. Specific spaces, tools, and abilities are not necessary to engage with art.^{1,4}

I'm happy this is a space that includes me.



Conclusions

- The arts can create spaces that make friendships a possibility.
- By implementing Arts-Based Programming at Holland Bloorview, children can participate meaningfully while promoting their overall health.
- The arts are an accessible medium for staff at Holland Bloorview to implement in any space a child is present.

Acknowledgements

- Thank you Iveta for taking the time to develop the search strategies with us.
- Thank you, Madhu and Yasmin, for helping us with the screening process.
- Thank you, Eric and Gillian, for your valuable insight, contributions, and support.