

Drawing with Autistic Children: An Investigation of Collaborative Drawing's Potential to Enhance Interaction and Communication to a Cognitive and Emotional Level

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Abstract

When working with autistic children, a goal is to facilitate the development of social and communication skills. This is a challenge, especially in the cases where verbal communication skills are absent or limited. In this context, drawing has the potential to serve as a visual language that facilitates communication and expression, with multidimensional benefits both for the autistic children and for their educators. This presentation discusses the process and the outcomes of a series of collaborative drawing sessions between autistic children and adult educators in Cyprus. The project has been based on the collaborative drawing method, practiced for the last six years at the Department of Preschool Education of Athens University. The collaborative drawing model is an interactive method of teaching drawing to children where adult

and child draw together on the same surface. In this pedagogical project, informed by Vygotsky's socio-pedagogical philosophy and his notion of the zone of proximal development, both partners are involved in a graphic dialogue exchanging drawing stereotypes as well as narrative themes and ideas. The findings provide evidence that breaks biases regarding people with autism and suggests that collaborative drawing has the potential to facilitate interaction and communication between autistic children and their adult drawing partners to a cognitive and emotional level. It also helps develop their drawing skills and enrich their visual vocabulary without any formal instruction.

Keywords

Autism, Education, Collaborative drawing, Communication, Visual language.