

# Art for Reconnecting Students with School

Ruchi Kotnala

After months of distress and stagnancy, our lives are finally coming back to normal. In the process of unlocking routine activities, the government is now all set to reopen schools. However, this is going to be challenging for school administration, teachers, parents and students. Particularly for students, it will be much more difficult to feel confident and comfortable in school after such a long gap. Therefore, it has become very important to plan some strategies which will help students to re-acclimatise to school with full confidence and interest.

I feel that art can become an effective tool to reconnect students with education. Being an art teacher, I have created a work plan. The use of waste and natural materials, group-based activities and subject integration will be the core of my strategies.

## Use of waste and natural materials

During the lockdown, most students were unable to access regular art materials like paper, colours etc. So, I encouraged them to use waste and natural materials, which were easily available in their homes and surroundings. In all these months, students have made several artworks with these materials. Taking this forward in school will enable them to get comfortable in the classrooms.

There are many advantages of using waste and natural elements. Sometimes students, particularly those who are not skilled in sketching, get bored while doing artwork with routine materials, like paper, sketch pens, watercolours etc, but they find it difficult to express their boredom. In such situations, the use of waste and natural materials can be very useful in re-developing their interest, enhancing their sensory skills by adding a fun element to the learning process. As there is no fixed technique to the use of waste materials, a lot of creativity, innovation and exploration are needed to make art from them. Even though schools provide all possible art materials to students at school, at home, most parents cannot afford to buy such resources for their children on a regular basis. Because of this many students are not able to reach

their full potential. However, waste and natural materials are easily and abundantly available in their homes and surroundings. So, by using them students can continue their artistic journey freely, without having to spend much. Moreover, working with waste and natural materials instils the value of recycling and respect for nature in young minds.

## Some suggestions

Students generally draw landscapes and picture compositions on paper in art class. A similar activity can be done with waste and natural materials. Ask students to explore their surroundings and collect different types of stones, sticks, leaves, cardboard, newspaper, twine etc. Students can either make a landscape by pasting these on cardboard or they can make a model with these.

For storytelling activities, students can make puppets and face masks from old socks, cloth, newspapers and sticks etc.

## Group activities

Working in groups is essential for the mental and emotional development of children. There are some students who perform better while working in a group. But during the lockdown, students worked individually, which not only affected their learning ability but also raised several psychological problems. I also observed issues, like children trying to avoid online classes, not showing interest in their work or hesitating to express their thoughts and feelings. It is important to resolve these issues when students come back to school. For this, I plan to organise group-based activities, which will give children a chance to interact freely, rebuild bonds with their classmates and gain confidence. Besides, it will also make the learning process more enjoyable for them.

## Some suggestions

Students can be asked to decorate the school garden with waste and natural materials. For this, teachers can divide students into teams and assign a specific area to each to decorate on a given theme, such as birds, insects, flowers etc. All team members must join the planning and in

collecting materials, decorating, documenting and presentation. After completing the task, each team would be required to do peer assessment not only of their own teammates but of members of the other teams too. Similarly, we can also organise group-based activities for storytelling sessions. Here, each team can create and present their story by making storybooks, models and puppets, etc.

### Integrating art with other subjects

We all know that the environment of a school plays a very important role in the learning process and schools try to create a suitable environment for their students. However, for several months now, children have been restricted to their homes and it is going to be difficult for them to get accustomed to the school environment again. This may result not only in a lack of interest in studies but may also affect their learning process. So, it is important

to make learning interesting and enjoyable. To achieve this, integrating art with other subjects like social science, maths, language, etc, would be an effective strategy.

### Some suggestions

For example, to teach the concept of 'big and small' in maths, students can be asked to draw animals such as an elephant, lion, dog and mouse. Similarly, students can be asked to make storyboards and models for poems and stories, both in English and their first language. Then again, to give an understanding of the pre-historic era in social science, students can be asked to make weapons and tools from wood and stones. We can also ask them to paint stones with natural colours extracted from flowers, vegetables, fruits, limestone, etc. Apart from this, students can also write or draw hieroglyphs on tree bark, cloth or clay.



Art works and Compositions made from waste materials by students of APS Matli

## Sample lesson plan: Class I

Subject: Visual Art (Integration with Hindi)

Topic: Chapter 4: पत्ते ही पत्ते

### Objectives:

1. To make the learning process enjoyable and interesting
2. To give an opportunity to students to showcase their creativity, innovation and imagination with complete freedom
3. To encourage students to create art from waste and natural objects
4. To develop qualities like teamwork, exploration, planning, sharing of ideas and presentation

### Resources:

1. NCERT class I Hindi textbook (*Rimjhim*)
2. Representative images/photos from the internet
3. Representative videos from *YouTube*

### Teaching plan:

1. Before starting the activity, the teacher will ask students to collect different types of leaves from their surroundings. Students will be encouraged to gather fallen leaves and not to pluck them from plants.
2. Next, the teacher will ask the students to minutely observe the leaves (both collected by them and by other students). After this, the class will discuss the differences between leaves on the basis of their size, shape, colour and texture.
3. The teacher will also ask some questions, like what is the importance of leaves for plants? What is the difference between a fallen leaf and the leaf which is still growing on a plant? Why do different plants have different types of leaves?
4. After this, the teacher will show some videos and photos of artworks made with leaves.<sup>i</sup>

5. Then, the teacher will divide students into different groups and ask each group to make a *bandanwar* (decorative door hanging) with leaves and flowers. Students can make paper or cloth flowers and patterns to decorate their home and classrooms with these.
6. The next activity will be 'leaf printing'. In this, each member of the group will bring a different type of leaf and select a specific colour, then, the whole group will jointly make leaf prints on a large-size paper. A mix of colours and leaf shapes will create interesting patterns.
7. After this, students will do 'leaf characters/figures' activity. In this, students will have to make some characters or figures (cat, fish, dog, bird, human, house, boat etc.) using leaves.
8. In the end, the teacher will read aloud Chapter 4: 'पत्ते ही पत्ते'. The teacher will also help students understand and pronounce difficult and new words.
9. During these activities, the teacher will observe and document the responses of students.

### Assessment:

Points 1-4: Rate on a scale of 1-3

Points 5-8: Provide one-line answers

1. Displays cooperative participation in the arts and appreciates peers.
2. Classifies/identifies colours, shapes, textures, sounds and patterns.
3. Enjoys exploring different materials to create artworks and enactments.
4. Talks about the things they find beautiful or otherwise; appreciates beauty in nature.
5. What did you do well in this activity?
6. What improvement will you make to do better in future?
7. Children who do well in this activity.
8. Children who need more guidance.

### Endnotes

i <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBEPR7wziDM> | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kIYABvcvCo>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8mkkC9fs1k>



**Ruchi Kotnala** teaches Art and Craft to primary and upper primary grades at the Azim Premji School at Matli, Uttarkashi. She has a master's degree in drawing and painting from HNB Garhwal University, Uttarakhand. Besides art and craft, she enjoys travel, dance and music. Her philosophy for life is to enjoy the small things, reduce materialistic burden and be grateful for whatever one has. She can be contacted at [ruchi.kotnala@azimpremji.org](mailto:ruchi.kotnala@azimpremji.org)