

# Integrating Outcomes for Middle Level Learners with Media Arts and SEL During COVID-19

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## The Problem

During the COVID-19 pandemic, middle level learners faced great challenges academically, socially, and emotionally.

Arts integration has been identified as a strategy that meets, unites, and engages students in several overlapping learning outcomes or goals at the same time. With technology at the center of distance learning, media arts appears to be poised as a medium to meet art integrated goals that remain connected to students' interests and current needs.

Further, there is evidence pointing to the benefits of providing explicit social emotional learning curriculum for secondary students. Some research has also indicated that integrating arts and social-emotional learning (SEL) outcomes may result in more meaningful connections for all secondary level learners.

## Results

- ❖ Students expressed an increase in personal art making during the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily as a tool for self-management and self-expression while in distance learning.
- ❖ Students perceived art class as a safe space, where they could express themselves, connect with peers, and refocus during the day. Additionally, students drew connections between art class and the development of their own growth mindset and ability to empathize with others.
- ❖ After a year of distance learning, some students showed an interest in media arts, and many students had a desire to return to traditional art tools.

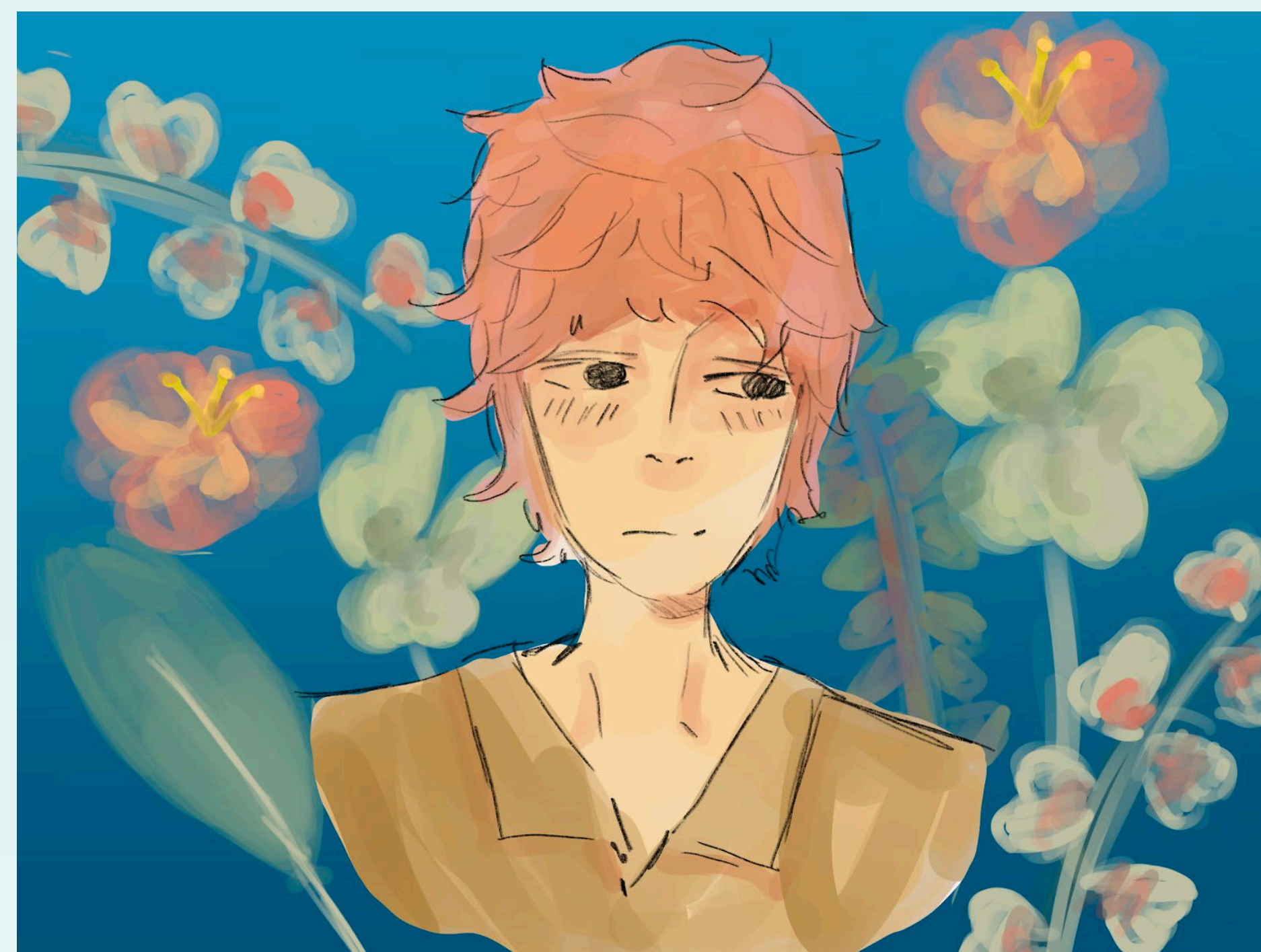
## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the role art making has played in middle level student's lives, in and out of school, during distance learning. Specifically, the study examined outcomes for students in three key domains: arts integration, media arts, and social-emotional learning (SEL). The study endeavored to ask: *What outcomes might emerge from integrating media arts with social-emotional competencies for middle level learners?*

### Arts Integration

### Media Arts

### Social Emotional Learning



"idk I just like plants" -- Digital illustration, 2021 - Student G

## Methodology

- ❖ The qualitative narrative research study used a practitioner-researcher design and was conducted with seven middle level youth participants enrolled in a graphic arts course at a Title 1 middle level school during distance learning.
- ❖ Data were collected through:
  - ❖ Pre-instructional interviews
  - ❖ Post-instructional questionnaire
  - ❖ Researcher journal
  - ❖ Student artwork & statements
- ❖ Participants engaged in a two-week integrated media arts unit, reflecting on their experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic & distance learning. Students analyzed works by contemporary artists addressing COVID-19 around the globe, used SEL practices to reflect on their experiences, and created an original work of media art.

## Implications

The results of the study provided insights into potential connections between media arts, social-emotional learning, and arts integration.

Specifically, integrating media arts and SEL in a distance learning context may support specific SEL practices, such as self-management, self-expression, empathy building, and reflection. Leveraging media arts in this context can also drive opportunities for sharing and connection between peers.

This study's findings provide considerations on how art educators and general education practitioners might leverage media arts and art-making as a tool for social and emotional reflection in times of crisis.