

AAIDD Interest Network Annual Plan & Yearly Report

Planning and reporting on Interest Network activities designed to fulfill their purpose.
(See the *Interest Networks Leadership Manual* for the purpose of the Interest Networks.)

Interest Network: Creative Arts

Lead Contact Person: Michelle Thompson (Chair): Old Dominion University mlthomps@odu.edu and Tamara Shetron (Vice Chair): Texas State University tamara.shetron@txstate.edu

Next Scheduled Election May 2026 & Leadership Position(s) that will be Open for Nomination:

- a) Chair: Michelle Thompson **OPEN May 2026**
- b) Vice Chair/Research: Tamara Shetron **OPEN May 2026**
- c) Secretary/Treasurer: Peter Temple; **OPEN May 2026**
- d) Social Media: Sam Brophy; **OPEN May 2026**
- e) Innovation/Information: **OPEN Now!**
- f) Membership/Communication: **OPEN Now!**
- g) Advisory Mentor: Yumi Shirai

2024-2025 Report

For the year that **just ended** (July 1-June 30), indicate objectives met, activities completed, and funds used. In addition, please note if/how any activities enhanced diversity, equity, inclusion, or justice.

Objectives for 2025-2026:

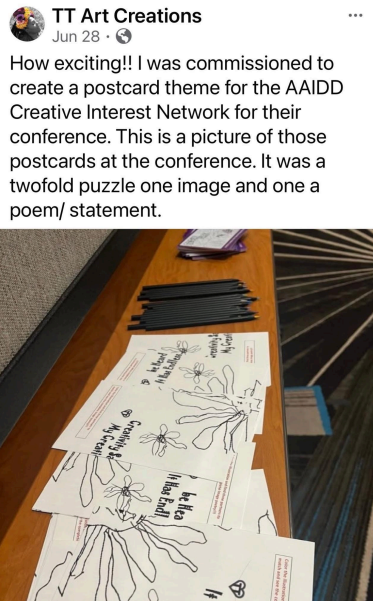
- a) Expand membership and network member involvement
- b) Increase network visibility and collaboration
- c) Increase awareness of the critical role of creativity to promote inclusion and belonging for all people
- d) Collaborate with other AAIDD Interest Networks

Activities for 2024-2025:

- 1) Hosted **monthly steering committee meetings** to plan and prepare webinars hosted by this interest network, discuss ways to expand our interest network, discuss possible future collaborations, and discuss ways to make our interest network more accessible and meaningful to artists with IDD.
- 2) Used our funds to pay for postcards and colored pencils for 600+ attendees of the AAIDD Conference 2025. Postcards had creative activity to color on one side; information about Creative Arts Interest Network on the other side. The theme of the cards is **"Art Connects"** and was designed (and paid \$50) by disabled artist "TT Art Creations" who describes herself: "I am a poetry artist that advocates for individuals with disabilities. TT's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1A6XcCjaa7/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

Due July 15, 2024

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AAIDD Creative Arts Interest Network

We are a "Community of Practice" with a common interest—sharing creativity to promote the well-being of children and adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities—where members exchange knowledge and ideas to facilitate fellowship, research, and practice. We are one of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) Special Interest Networks.

Color the front illustration and find three partners to match and see the complete image poetry!!!

TT Art Creations Facebook:



Illustration and poetry by
Takeela Traner,
Advocacy Poetry Artist
Milwaukee WI



→

Creative Arts Interest Network Facebook:



3) We initiated research and presented our preliminary findings at the AAIDD Conference 2025 during a poster session. We are interested in documenting, through literature review initially, the intersections and overlaps between Creative Arts/Creativity and other areas of interest as represented by the AAIDD Interest Networks. Here is our poster:

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aaidd
American Association
on Intellectual and
Developmental Disabilities

Bridging the Transformative Power of Creativity and Creative Arts with AAIDD's Interdisciplinary Interest Networks

Michelle Thompson, PhD, OTR/L, Yumi Shirai, PhD, Peter Temple, PhD,
Tamara Shetron, PhD, & Samantha Brophy, MA, BCAT

Background & Purpose

The mission of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) is to advance progressive policies, rigorous research, effective practices, and universal human rights for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD).

AAIDD strives to foster an inclusive culture that promotes equity and enhances the quality of life, health, and well-being of people with IDD across the lifespan.

The Creative Arts Interest Network (IN) focuses on sharing knowledge, research, and practices that enhance the lives of children and adults with IDD through creative arts such as visual arts, dance, theatre, and music.

This review highlights the intersections between the Creative Arts and AAIDD's 18 other INs, demonstrating the transformative power of creativity and the creative arts in promoting self-expression, self-determination, inclusion, and belonging in various areas and contexts of life.

The study provides insights into how these outcomes can be applied across other INs' priority areas supporting the mission, vision, and values of the AAIDD to improve the lives of people with IDD.

Design & Research Questions

Creative arts empower individuals to generate ideas, bring them to life, and share their creativity with others.

This transformative process fosters self-expression, active engagement, human connection, and self-determination, ultimately promoting inclusion, equity, and belonging.

Knowing that creative arts empower people with IDD and support the vision, mission, and values of the AAIDD, we set out to better understand how creativity and creative arts intersect with AAIDD's other INs and their priorities, aiming to enrich the lives of people with IDD.

We are conducting a landscape review (study design) of current literature examining the overlapping areas of focus and priority outcomes of Creative Arts and other AAIDD INs. Our primary research questions are:

- 1) "How does creative arts intersect with the goals and priorities of AAIDD's 17 other interest networks: Communication Disorders, Community, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), Education, Families, Gerontology, Health & Wellness, International, Legal Process & Public Policy, Multicultural Concerns, Psychology, Technology, Research, Religion & Spirituality, Student & Early Career Professionals (SECP), Social & Sexual Relations, and Social Work?"
- 2) How can AAIDD's Interest Networks use creativity the creative process, and creative arts to enhance their efforts? The process of our literature review is as follows: a) identify research questions, b) screen and select relevant literature, and c) analyze and synthesize our findings. The target audience for this review includes family members, self-advocates, and professional members of AAIDD.

Findings

Preliminary findings from this review identify how the benefits of creativity and artistic expression overlap and enhance the initiatives of other AAIDD INs.

Examples include how creative arts, creative process, and expression:

- 1) Foster universal modes of communication and expression (e.g., overlap with Communication and International)
- 2) Provide innovative tools for artistic expression and access (e.g., overlap with Technology and Education)
- 3) Amplify advocacy efforts and influence public policy by showcasing the voices and talents of individuals with IDD (e.g., overlap with Legal Process & Public Policy and Research)
- 4) Promote inclusion through community spaces (e.g., overlap with Families, Community, Psychology, Direct Support Professionals, and Gerontology)
- 5) Support the expression of self-advocacy, identity, agency, and voice (e.g., overlap with Social & Sexual Relations, Social Work, Health & Wellness, and Multicultural Concerns).

Implications, Impact, & Next Steps

This study highlights the power of collaboration across INs and the transformative role of the arts and the creative process in enriching the lives of individuals with IDD.

By fostering self-expression, active engagement, self-determination, human connection, and empowerment, creative arts offer a vital pathway to achieving inclusion, equity, and belonging. Collaboration between the Creative Arts IN and other AAIDD INs is key to broadening the impact of these initiatives.

Together, we can create a dynamic platform that aligns with the mission of AAIDD to advance research, advocacy, and practice for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD).

Next steps: We are collecting data from AAIDD members (researchers, self-advocates, family-advocates, students, professionals) through a survey to gain a more qualitative and personal experience insights.

References, Resources, & Survey

Logos for ODU, TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY, THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA, and VCU are displayed at the bottom.

4) We continue to develop a database of creative arts studios (inclusive, progressive, etc..) in the US and internationally.

5) We have **submitted our manuscript and are under review!** We report findings of our research (mixed methods: surveys and interviews) with creative arts organizations that provide services to people with IDD for a peer-reviewed journal format. In this study, we asked participating organizations about their technology use, its impact, and lessons learned from COVID-19.

6) Social Media

- Website: <http://aiddcreativearts.com/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/221768532011107>

2025-2026 Plan: Goals, Objectives, Activities, and Strategies

For the **coming year** (July 1-June 30), describe the planned objectives, activities, and proposed expenditure of funds. In addition, please note if/how any activities will address diversity, equity, inclusion, or justice.

Annual Plan: Goals, Objectives, Activities, and Strategies

For the coming year (July 1, 2025 -June 30, 2026), describe the planned objectives, activities, and proposed expenditure of funds.

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Objectives for 2025-2026:

- a) Continue to expand membership and network member involvement
- b) Continue to increase Creative Arts network visibility and collaboration (within AAIDD and in the wider IDD and Arts communities)
- c) Increase Creative Arts network collaboration with other AAIDD interest networks (i.e. Spirituality, Gerontology, Health & Wellness, Technology)
- d) Increase awareness of the critical role of creativity to promote inclusion and belonging for all people
- e) Include and amplify voices of artists with IDD in the Creative Arts network

Proposed Activities for 2025-2026:

- 1) Host monthly steering committee meetings to plan and prepare all member quarterly meetings and conference proposals/presentations .
- 2) Submit conference symposium proposal/s (AAIDD, other conferences such as AERA or AUCD). Topics to address the importance of creativity and creative arts in the lives of people with IDD.
- 3) Host 2-3 all-member Creative Arts IN meetings with theme-based short presentation and group discussion on topics related to creative arts
 - a. Invite wider AAIDD membership to attend to learn about the impact of creativity and creative arts in the lives of artists with IDD.
 - b. Topics for 2024-25 to include:
 1. "Artists' Rights"
 2. "Mindfulness & Nature"
 3. "Artists' Voice, representation, and self-advocacy through the arts"
 4. Universal Design for Learning (to increase participation & engagement)
- 3) Continue to develop a database of creative arts studios (inclusive, progressive, etc..) in the US and internationally.
- 5) Reach out to self-advocates to include their representation, voice, and self-advocacy in our Creative Arts network (meetings, websites, presentations)
- 6) Ensure our Creative Arts network is inclusive and accessible by working towards implementing the following in our meetings, websites, presentations:
 1. Plain/Simple Language
 2. Accessible technology
 3. People with IDD participate and present and/or subcommittee of people with IDD to run ideas by if not available to joint the IN
 5. Universal Design for Learning applied to our meetings and presentations
- 7) Explore the possibility of starting a Creative Arts Journal. It would be interesting to see the format of other journals that accept arts (e.g., Canadian journal of disability studies), as well as accessible journal formats from other fields (e.g., <https://www.insea.org/imag/>; <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/content/visual-essays>).
- 8) Collaborate with other AAIDD Interest Networks (meetings, projects, etc...)

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9) Continue to work on our Literature review to discover and document how Creative Arts/Creativity intersects and overlaps with the other AAIDD IN areas of interest.