



January 31, 2016

Art Therapy Association of Vermont
Lynn Butler-Dube,
President

Dear Ms. Dube:

I am writing on behalf of the administration of the Integrated Arts Academy Magnet School (IAA) in Burlington Vermont to endorse your association's efforts to obtain a professional license for art therapists in Vermont. Bill H.546.

A professional, credentialed art therapist with a license in clinical mental health counseling has been working with students at IAA in group and individual art therapy since 2011. It is only because of the art therapist's dual training in both art therapy and mental health counseling that we have been able to bill individual student's insurance for art therapy services at no cost to the school. The availability of an art therapy license would have simplified the process and allowed our school and other local schools to expand art therapy services to many more students who are in desperate need of it.

The art therapist helps students who are referred for emotional and mental health issues to reconcile emotional conflicts using the art process. Art therapy utilizes the creative process as a vehicle for communication to help students develop insights, resolve emotional conflicts, and make positive behavioral changes, increasing their access to learning in the classroom.

School counseling has traditionally relied primarily on verbal communication limiting access to some of our most troubled students. Art therapy has been a powerful modality that is able to elicit both verbal and non-verbal expression of emotion so that the students are better able to understand their feelings, manage them and adopt socially acceptable behaviors.

Art therapy has been especially beneficial to the large refugee and immigrant population at IAA who often struggle with histories of trauma and the challenging assimilation and acculturation process. It is evident that art therapy is able to bypass the language and cultural barriers that traditional verbal therapies encounter and allow these students a vehicle of expression and healing that would otherwise not exist.

In addition 60% of the students at IAA, (formally the H.O. Wheeler school), qualify for free and reduced lunch and often come from homes with significant complex trauma, increasing their vulnerability and need for mental health services. Art therapy that accesses traumatic

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memories and experiences has allowed some of these children to regulate their emotions and increase their ability to function in all settings.

Staff members of IAA have worked closely with the art therapist, I strongly endorse the efforts of the Art Therapy Association of Vermont to gain professional recognition and licensure of art therapists so that all children and adolescents in Vermont will have access to art therapy services by highly trained, credentialed and qualified art therapy professionals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Prussack", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Victor Prussack
Assistant Director of Curriculum, Burlington School District, VT
Former Coordinator of Magnet Schools and IAA Transformation Coach, Burlington, VT

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