Drawing as a Tool for Wellbeing at Chesterton Community College, Cambridge

By **Sheila Ceccarelli**

Introduction

In the summer term last year, I was invited by **Morgain Murray Williams**, head of Art at **Chesterton Community College, Cambridge**, to help plan the art component of a wellbeing day for all the students at the school.

Drawing as a Tool for Wellbeing at Chesterton Community College, Cambridge

Though the school had no budget for external agencies to lead sessions, and being the end of the school year, materials in the store cupboards were scarce, there was a recognition by management, and staff, that delivering strategies for students to increase wellbeing and mental health needed to be prioritised.

Drawing for Mindfulness at Chesterton Community College

Teachers were determined and highly motivated to deliver a useful, meaningful and uplifting day for the students.

Drawing for Mindfulness at Chesterton Community College

Who is Art for?

The key emphasis, when planning the day, was that the sessions should not be delivered like measured, and curriculum based art lessons, but as a WHOLE school experience, with a shift in emphasis from art being for 'talented' artists, towards it being a tool for ALL students to engage with to increase wellbeing.

Wellbeing Day at Chesterton Community College, Cambridge

Drawing for Mindfulness

The first challenge was to break down preconceived ideas about drawing and change perceptions about what it is and who it is for. In this instance, drawing had to be re-branded, re-packaged and re-delivered, as a tool for **seeing and being in the here and now**.

Drawing was to be delivered as a discipline not hungry for fixed, measured outcomes, but one seeking open ended and fluid experiences in the present - powerful, mediative and reflective.

Amazing Teachers

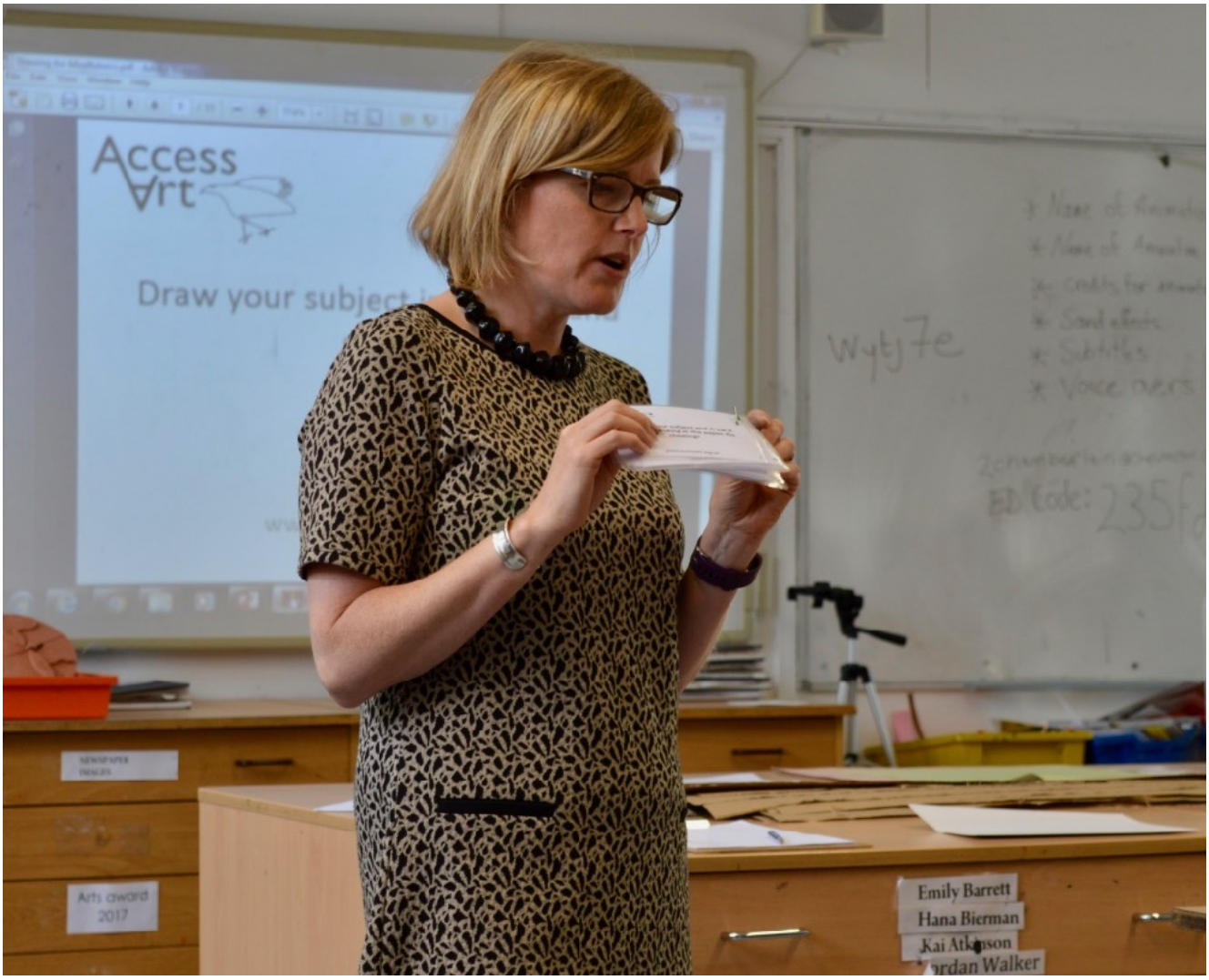
Three outstanding teachers delivered three 'Drawing for Mindfulness' sessions, back to back over the course of a whole day.

By the end of Wellbeing Day, over three hundred students had been tutored on how to draw 'in the here and now', and were given strategies on how they might use drawing as a vehicle for wellbeing.

Lucy Blake, teacher at Chesterton Community College, Introducing Drawing for Mindfulness with her own prompts

Warm up

Teachers led guided drawing exercises using **AccessArt Drawing for Mindfulness Prompt Cards**. They set up their classroom tables with natural objects including shells and leaves, and an array of drawing materials for the students to explore.



Morgain Murray Williams introducing drawing prompts

Drawing Prompts

AccessArt Drawing for Mindfulness Prompt Cards were used to get over the white page and gain confidence in drawing processes.

They were presented as tools for wellbeing and the exploration of drawing and mark making in the context of BEING in the present.

Drawing prompts for Drawing for Mindfulness

Drawing prompts included:

Look and draw your subject in the time it takes to inhale and exhale one breath.
Draw your subject with your non-dominant hand.
Hold your pencil or pen lightly from the top (with all five fingers) and dangle it over the paper drawing your subject.
Draw your chosen subject in a continuous line without taking your pencil or pen off of the paper.
Draw your chosen subject in five lines.
Draw your chosen subject in three lines.
Look at your subject and draw it without looking at the paper. No cheating!
Draw your subject in dots and specks.
Draw your subject in scrapes and slices.
Draw the outline of your subject in one, strong gesture.
Draw your subject without blinking.

Draw your subject’s shadow.
Draw your subject from inside out with no outline or contour at all (use only shading).

Rebecca Gardner leads students in guided drawing exercises

'Hold your pencil lightly in the tips of your fingers' - Drawing prompt

Subject

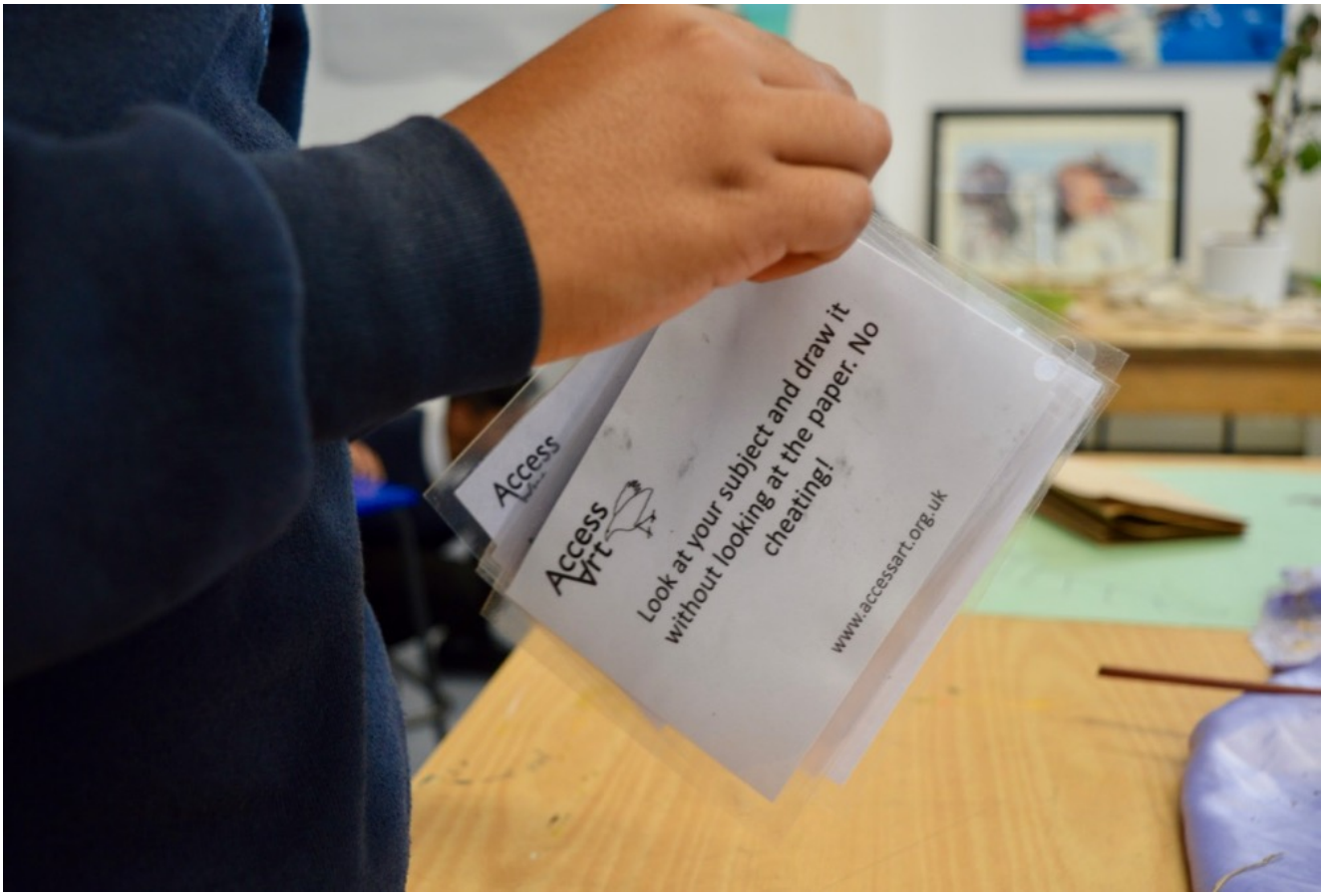
The drawing prompts often refer to a 'subject'. The subject is the object in front of you that you are drawing. The subject can either be natural or man-made. It can be in a room or out in nature. In the context of Chesterton's Wellbeing Day, teachers set up the room with natural objects for the students to study. Prompt cards were used to look and draw in a facilitated way.

In the context of 'drawing for mindfulness', drawing is looking, studying and BEING with the 'subject'.

Access Art
Look at your subject and draw it without looking at the paper. No cheating!
www.accessart.org.uk

Drawing from a prompt - Looking at a 'subject'

Drawing for Mindfulness prompt

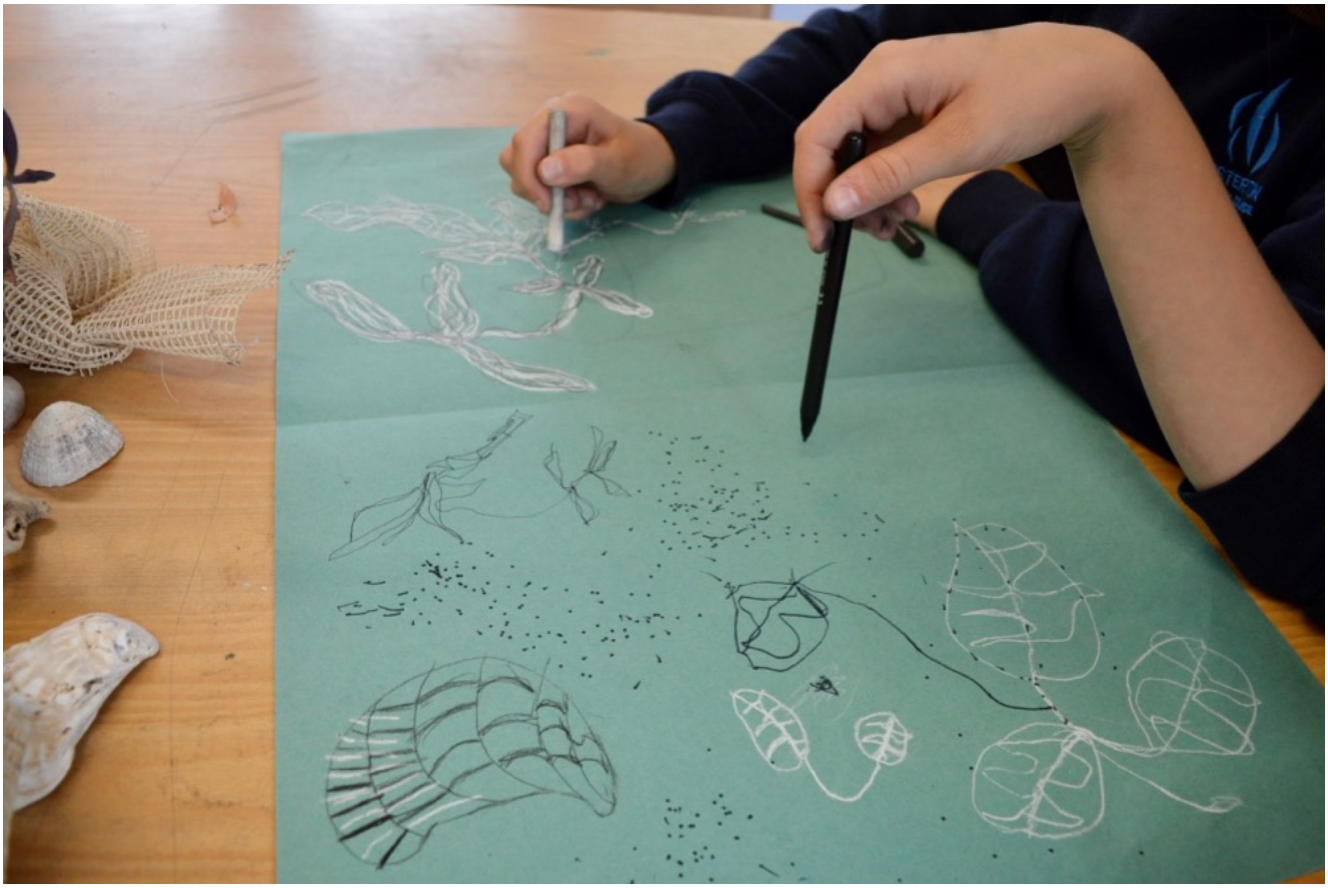


AccessArt Drawing for Mindfulness Prompt Cards

Materials

Teachers had available many drawing mediums and surfaces for students to intuitively explore.

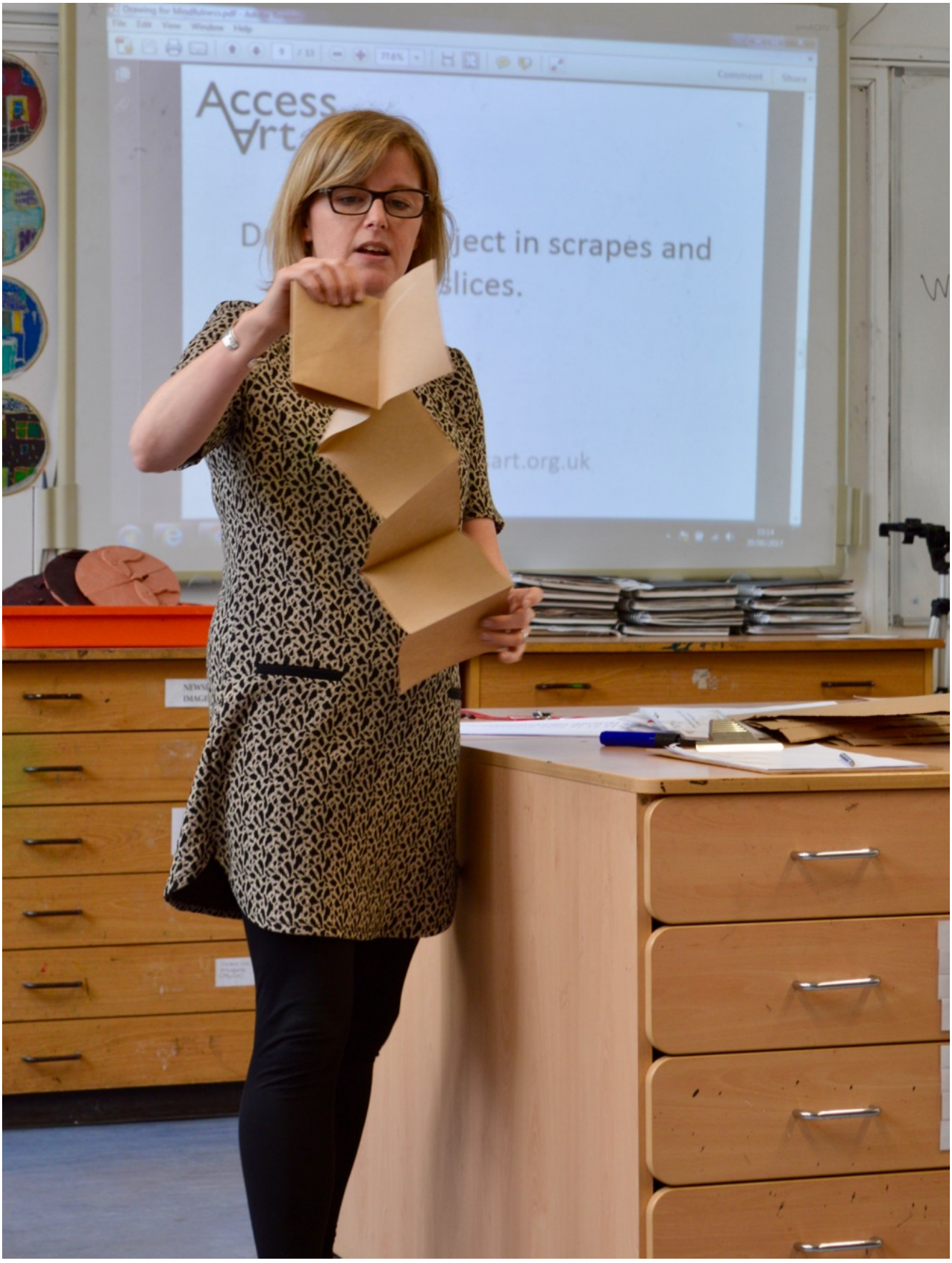
Using materials with prompt cards



Drawing to prompts with mixed drawing materials

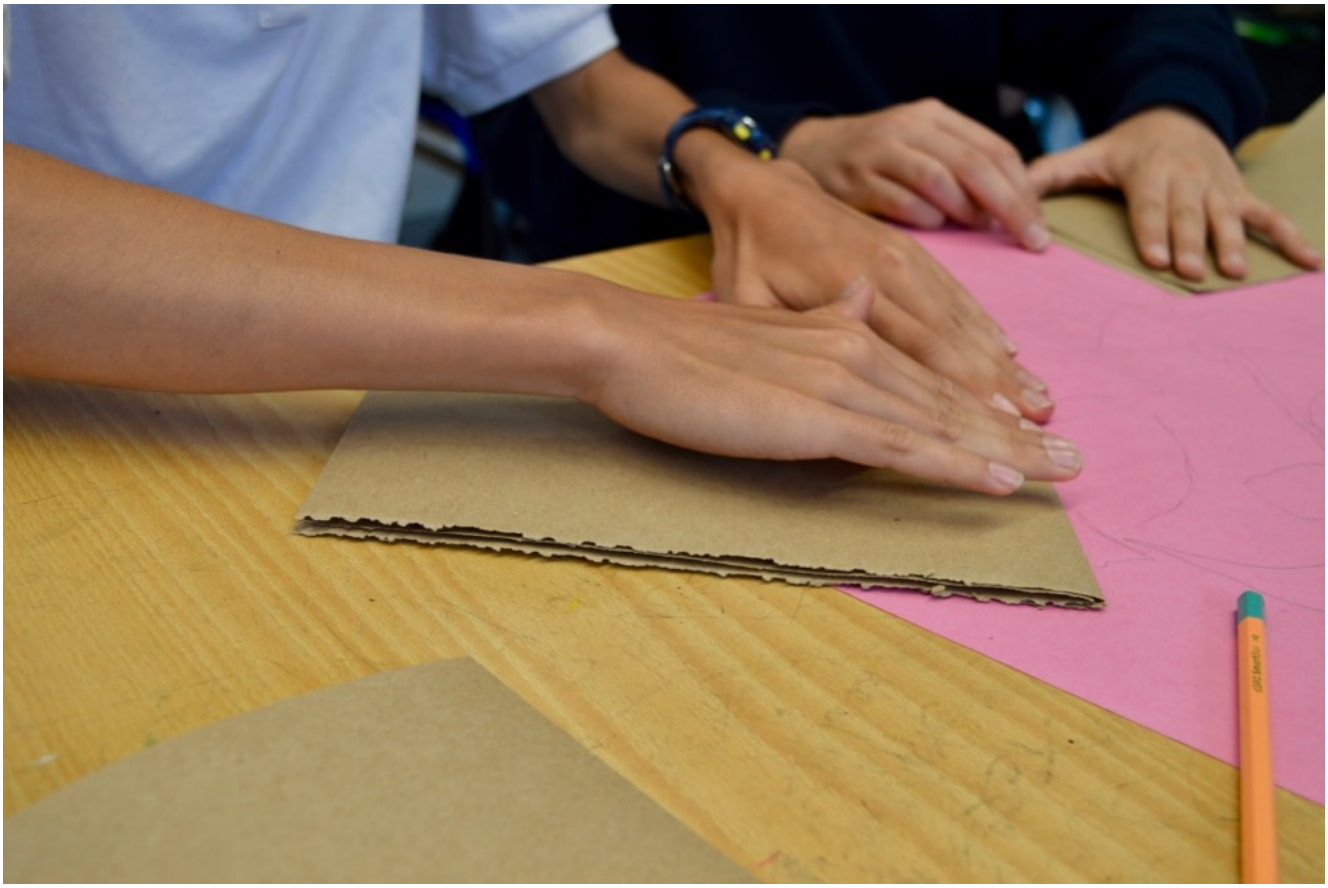
Making a Zigzag Sketchbook

In the final part of each session, students were encouraged to work from prompts independently and create a series of drawings in a "zigzag" sketchbook. Here students were given a chance to take OWNERSHIP of the ideas and processes presented, so that they might be used beyond the classroom walls.



Morgain Murray Williams shows how to make a zigzag sketchbook

Folding brown paper to create a zigzag sketchbook



Working Alone and Final Outcomes

Working alone - exploring drawing and being in the 'here and now'

Zigzag sketchbook and a 'mindful drawing' in charcoal

Finished Zigzag sketchbooks with 'mindful drawings' at Chesterton Community College

What was the Point?

Ultimately the aim of the day was to empower students to feel confident and entitled to their own creativity and understand that creativity can be a catalyst for change, reflection and wellbeing.

Many thanks to the many students at **Chesterton Community College**, who shared their creative process with AccessArt and allowed me to photograph the sessions.

A huge thank you to **Morgain Murray Williams** for inviting AccessArt to help with the school's Wellbeing Day, and many thanks to Morgain, Lucy Blake and Rebecca Gardner for leading such inspiring and enriching sessions.

Please feel free to use **AccessArt's Drawing for Mindfulness**

Prompt Cards which can be downloaded by following the link.

See more **Creative Entitlement and Wellbeing** posts by following the link.

This is a sample of a resource created by UK Charity AccessArt. We have over 1500 resources to help develop and inspire your creative thinking, practice and teaching.

AccessArt welcomes artists, educators, teachers and parents both in the UK and overseas.

We believe everyone has the right to be creative and by working together and sharing ideas we can enable everyone to reach their creative potential.