



Creative Arts Therapy at Milpera

This was the inaugural year of Creative Arts Therapy at Milpera. The students received two types of service: in-class sessions and individual sessions for one to three students at a time in 2004.

The in-class sessions used art, music and movement as relaxation. Activities varied with an emphasis on non-challenging, enjoyable tasks. These activities improved fine motor skills and introduced students to working with art materials confidently. Communication skills and group work skills benefited, with the main aim being relaxation after the day's hard work learning English.

The individual sessions took place in "the small room", a space containing many small toys and varied art materials. Students have come to Creative Arts Therapy through referral from teachers or self-referral; by being picked up when found out of class; and as a result of identified need at student welfare meetings. Individually or in twos or threes, students spent time there involving themselves in talk, sandplay, movement and art making. The aims in the small room vary according to the child. Sessions are a chance for a child to relax and enjoy some special attention, building a trust relationship while sharing their stories of life as they are experiencing it. Through the experiential approach to psychotherapy, it is possible to help the students understand better some aspects of their lives. This in turn gives them more choice about how they want to operate within their lives.

I particularly look forward to the coming year as the HEAL Project (Home for Creative Arts Learning) comes to fruition, in the form of a new second-hand demountable classroom, donated to Milpera, and to be set up for art and relaxation.