

Art Academy (AA) F.A.Q.

What is the Art Inspired Academy (AIA)?

AA started in 2013 to help people with and without disabilities enjoy creative arts like theater, movement, music, and more.

Who can join AA classes?

Anyone age 3 or older can join AA classes, whether they have a disability or not. The program helps everyone express themselves through art.

What skills do participants learn in AA?

Students learn important skills such as:

- Communication
- Motor skills (like movement)
- Social skills (like making friends)
- Self-control
- Decision-making
- Concentration
- Confidence
- Independence
- Pre-vocational

Where are AA classes held?

Classes take place at different places in Springfield, like:

- AcompanArte
- Discovery Center
- Drew Lewis Foundation
- Local churches
- Springfield Art Museum
- Various businesses

Can students attend classes online?

Yes! Some classes have a virtual option and are listed as either Zoom or Hybrid.

How many students are in each class?

Classes are small, usually with a maximum of 10 students, and have a lot of support from instructors. If the class you were hoping to join is filled, check out the calendar for other options, as we do not maintain a waiting list.

When are AA classes offered?

Classes are usually from Monday to Friday, with some on Saturday. They can be scheduled anytime between 8:00 AM and 7:00 PM and last 1 to 2 hours. Classes run for about six weeks, but there can also be “pop-up” classes that meet just once.

How can people find out about the classes?

You can check the calendar of events on the Abilities First website. Anyone can sign up!

Who teaches the AA classes?

Qualified AA staff members lead the classes. They have experience in the arts and training in how to support people with disabilities. When the student has an individual support plan, the student and support team will have identified the goals and objectives for community integration or social skills development.

How do students pay for classes?

Funding and fees for classes vary according to the class structure. Funding is available can come from resources like:

- The Missouri Department of Mental Health/Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Southwest Missouri Autism Project
- Scholarships from Abilities First, Friends of Abilities First.

Students without disabilities and those not eligible for state funded services may either self-pay or may be eligible for scholarship funds. Contact Art Academy for more information.

How do people get referred to the AA program?

Referrals usually come from Support Coordinators, partner agencies, family members, or the general public. Families are also welcome to contact Abilities First.

What makes AA special?

AA provides a unique way for people with and without developmental disabilities to learn social skills, be part of the community while having fun with the arts and in the kinds of classes they choose. All AA classes are community based.

Can students take more than one class?

Yes! Students can join as many classes as they want depending on their funding and available slots.

What are some success stories from AA?

Many participants have gained confidence and independence, showing how the program has positively affected their lives. Please contact the Art Academy if you would like to speak with a student or family member about their experiences with the academy.



Turning Abilities into *Opportunities*

Abilities First is dedicated to ensuring that people with developmental disabilities can experience full inclusion where they live, learn, work, and play. Inclusion benefits everyone in our society. By bringing people together, our community can be strengthened to make a greater whole.