Art therapy is a mental health profession that uses the creative process of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. It is based on the belief that the creative process involved in self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight.

Art therapy has been an integral part of M-DCPS' approach to assisting students identified with emotional/behavioral disabilities. Through art therapy, students find a means for reaching their potential and accessing educational opportunities. Potential benefits of art therapy in schools include:

- Providing a means of communication and expression that does not rely on verbal interchange.
- Stimulating an individual’s creativity thereby increasing intellectual frames of reference.
- Providing non-threatening ways to work through problems, feelings, traumas, and fears.
- Overcoming resistance and reluctance.
- Increasing engagement in the therapeutic process.
- Providing a tangible product that can be used for ongoing assessment of a student’s progress.
- Enhancing visual-spatial skills, problem solving and interpersonal skills.
- Providing a balance to analytical, logical, and verbal skills.

Using Creativity to Help Students Feel Empowered and Engaged.
ARTthread is a computer-based, proactive, and innovative program, which art therapists are using to engage and empower students. Through ARTthread, students learn skills related to: self-esteem, self-regulation, computer proficiency, communication, and problem solving skills and more, which can translate into employment skills.

The ARTthread program within M-DCPS has been developed in collaboration with the following organizations:

- M-DCPS Clinical Art Therapy Department
- The Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET)
- Project 10: Transition Education Network

M-DCPS Clinical Art Therapists implement the ARTthread program with secondary students identified with emotional/behavioral disabilities.

Project 10 serves as the primary conduit between the Florida Department of Education and the school district in addressing law and policy, effective practices, and research-based interventions in the area of transition services for youth with disabilities.

SEDNET focuses on providing a quality system of care for students with or at-risk of emotional and/or behavioral challenges.

The goal of the collaboration between SEDNET, Project 10, and M-DCPS Clinical Art Therapists is to provide transition skills and services to students.

ARTthread aims to demonstrate positive results through measured improvements in the areas of attendance, behavior, and academic performance.

Students have positive interpersonal experiences during their online sharing through the creation of “threads” linking their artwork to others’.

Students participate in an annual art exhibit to reinforce and highlight their accomplishments. Future endeavors for ARTthread involve the development of school-based entrepreneurial opportunities to build upon transition to work skills.

For More Information:
http://arttherapy.dadeschools.net
www.project10.artthread.org
www.project10.info
www.sednetfl.info

These two images are representative of the opportunity for personal expression through the use of ARTthread coupled with the “thread” feature which allows students to connect through their imagery and, in this instance, provide support.