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Title: Instilling a practice of listening, reflecting and envisioning: Addressing the gaps through arts education in COVID-19 times.

Subtitle: Arts Education and Psychosocial Support

As an arts education non-profit, this pandemic has made us question our purpose in the community. How can we *now* support our students in the best possible way? The lockdown period has provided us with the time to reflect on what we do as we often find ourselves working quickly and troubleshooting, like most NGOs, without time for necessary reflection. Things had needed to change for some time and this pause has allowed us to *listen* to our students, educators and community members, thus enabling us to see and acknowledge some of the gaps and downfalls in how we practice and how we have been servicing our community. It has made us question what we do, how we do it, and what we can do more effectively in addressing these gaps and the effects of COVID-19 on our students, their families and our community. As a creative arts education community centre, we needed to re-envision our future in COVID-19 times.

We went back to the beginning and spent time thinking about this in the development of a new curriculum that focuses on the psychological and emotional well-being of our students, and the gaps that the current school system and family structures cannot provide for in the wake of the pandemic but that creative arts education and spaces like ours possibly can. Changing our focus, the speed at which we operate and ironing out new processes and procedures has been a good thing to think about, write up and rehearse. In workshopping this we developed a new curriculum to be launched when our students return. Our current lesson

themes focus on: *Emotional and Mental Health* - anger, fear, grief, isolation, depression, self-sabotage, domestic violence and abuse, self-care/meditation practices, platforms to help, hygiene (COVID-19); *Conflict resolution/Problem solving*; *The Future and Active citizenship*.

Dramatic Need founded in 2007 is a non-profit creative arts organisation providing issue-focused arts education to young people in Rammulotsi - a township just outside of Viljoenskroon in the Free State.