

A Symphony of Sites

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Symphony, as Daniel Pink defines it in his book *A Whole New Mind*, is “the ability to put together the pieces” in a unified whole. It is the capacity to “see the big picture,” to notice relationships between seemingly unrelated fields or things, to think metaphorically, and to invent something new by combining elements that nobody else thought to join. The following sites offer ideas and resources for fostering Symphonic thinking in your classroom.

Learning to Draw

According to Pink, learning how to draw is one of the best ways to understand and develop the aptitude of Symphony. He describes his experience of taking a drawing class based on methods pioneered by Betty Edwards and detailed in her popular book, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (www.drawright.com). Encouraged by his success in the course, Pink emphasizes that learning to draw requires one to become better at seeing relationships between positive space and negative space, light and shadow, and angles and proportions. These ideas are familiar to art teachers and are also the basis for the drawing lessons offered through Draw! (www.accessart.org.uk/drawing/contentspage.swf), an interactive learning resource offered by Access Art that introduces adolescent students to the basics of drawing.

Many art teachers promote drawing through the use of sketchbooks. For ideas on using sketchbooks in

your classroom, see “Keeping a Sketchbook” on Art Junction (www.artjunction.org/sketchbook.php), which also includes instructions on making a sketchbook. For additional tips on teaching drawing to students, see Art Professor Marvin Bartel’s advice on “making it easier for the right brain and harder for the left brain” to learn to draw (www.goshen.edu/art/ed/easydraw.html).

Interdisciplinary Connections

Art education provides ample opportunities for promoting interdisciplinary connections—another one of Pink’s key strategies for achieving Symphony. The Guggenheim Museum’s Learning Through Art program (www.learningthroughart.org) encourages teachers to develop art lessons that support student learning across the curriculum. The program’s website offers suggestions and resources for facilitating class discussions around works of art and descriptions of cross-curricular art projects that enable students to work with important ideas and questions.

For photography teachers, the International Center of Photography (www.icp.org) offers a downloadable curriculum guide that explores some of the many possibilities for interdisciplinary connections through photographic education. Another excellent site for making connections across disciplines is the British Library’s Arts and Images site (www.bl.uk/learning/artimages), which includes a number of interesting ideas for integrated art lessons involving mapping, bodies of knowledge, writing, and book-making.

Seeing Negative Spaces

According to Pink, “Negative space is the part of the big picture we often overlook.” Seeing negative space is an important skill for students to learn in drawing as well as in photography, as illustrated in the Negative Space Pool on Flickr (www.flickr.com/groups/negativespace/), which includes over 14,000 photographic images contributed by group members.

Artists to Study

Blending together different ideas, elements, and disciplines to produce unified compositions is essential to the creative processes of many artists. For example, Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination (www.pem.org/cornell) is an interactive Web feature that beautifully illustrates the artist’s ingenuity in integrating ideas, materials, and traditions from a diverse range of disciplines into creating a new art form—the box construction. Another artist that students will enjoy studying is cartoonist Rube Goldberg (www.rubegoldberg.com) who designed convoluted inventions that combined varied actions and devices to perform simple tasks. Lastly, M. C. Escher (www.mcescher.com) taught himself math and science to achieve his artistic goals. His legendary tessellations, which contain repeating geometric patterns of distinct shapes, are often used to teach students of varying ages connections between art and math. 🌀

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