

# We All Produce and Consume

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**E**rnest Boyer's human commonalities cite ways that we, as citizens of the world, are connected through similarities. One of the commonalities is that "we all produce and consume." Chances are that you have considered how this commonality applies to certain aspects of your life, but have you considered how this might apply to you as a student-teacher?

To explore how the concepts of produce and consume apply to student teachers, it is first necessary to understand definitions of the terms. According to Dictionary.com, one definition of *produce* suggests bringing something into existence by intellectual or creative ability, while a definition of *consume* suggests the activity of absorbing. Using these definitions as guidelines, *produce* equals your creation of quality art-based lessons, while *consume* relates to your audience of students, who will absorb most of what you teach.

## Produce

Like artists, teachers create products. While an artist produces objects for viewers to consume, the teacher or student teacher produces lessons for classroom consumption. Like artwork, art lessons are dependent upon content and presentation. They can engage or disconnect with the consumer according to their relevance. This relevance is explained as a sense of basic "rightness" in *Bridging the Curriculum through Art: Interdisciplinary Connections: For the artist there comes a time during the creative process when a sense of rightness occurs; a time when the individual parts of a work of art somehow magically fit together to make a complete and finished piece. For the art teacher, a similar sense of rightness happens when the constituent parts of a lesson or unit of study*

*align to create a successful learning experience for students. Successful artists rely upon personal interpretation of the functions and structures of art to create the desired effect. Successful art teachers should likewise rely upon certain structures to create desired learning experiences and outcomes for their students. The best art lessons and units of study are those that seek meaning and encourage deep thought that extends beyond the designated class time; indeed, the best art lessons are those that contribute to meaningful discourse long after the material has been taught.*

When contemplating the kinds of lessons you will create, think about short-term and long-term goals. What will students internalize during the lesson and what will they take with them that will inform their understanding in the future?

## Consume

When you go shopping, what are the qualities that you seek in products? Do you look for well-crafted items that will be durable and long lasting? Do you seek products that are appealing? Functional? Streamlined? Economical? Cutting edge? There are similar qualities to consider in the lessons you produce and that students are expected to consume. Since students likely do not have the ability to shop around for the best lessons to experience, it is incumbent upon you to produce those high-quality and meaningful lessons. Here is a brief checklist of ideas to consider:

- Include a pre-assessment activity to make sure students have sufficient knowledge to successfully complete the lesson.
- Collaborate with other teachers or review other content standards to make logical connections. Avoid producing lessons that are disconnected from other learning.

- Maintain art as central to learning. Help students find meaning and intent in works of art.
- Include skills-building, but shun lessons that rely upon an outcome of mastery of technique (for example, "in the style of" lessons often lead to frustration when students are expected to replicate the methods of master artists).
- Incorporate the elements of art and the principles of design, but understand that these terms are little more than basic vocabulary and as such are rarely sufficient as the basis for meaningful lessons.
- Create lessons that get to the point and make sure that the goal of the lesson is explicitly stated.
- Align all parts of the lesson so that it is taught in sequence and step-by-step.
- Include self reflection.
- Make sure that assessment is transparent and that students are able to self-assess.
- A good rule of thumb is to whether or not the lesson is open-ended. Does the lesson suggest big questions of how or why? Will the lesson make a difference in the life or learning of the student consumer?



## References

- Boyer, Ernest L. *The Basic School: A Community for Learning*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1995.
- Stephens, Pam and Nancy Walkup. *Bridging the Curriculum Through Art: Interdisciplinary Connections*. (2nd ed.). Glenview, IL: Crystal Productions, in press.

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*Artists produce objects for viewers to consume; likewise, art student teachers produce lessons for their students to consume.*