

Planning with Meaning

As you embark upon your student-teaching experience, you should keep in mind that you are moving toward your goal of becoming a certified art educator. At this point, you probably feel more like a student than a teacher, but in reality the opposite is closer to the truth. Young learners who file through your art classroom see you as a teacher. It's time for you to see yourself that way, too. As a teacher, new responsibilities now fall upon your shoulders. One of those responsibilities is planning and delivering worthwhile art-based lessons.

Before starting to plan, touch base with your host teacher. Inquire if the teacher prefers for you follow his or her lessons or if you should create your own. In most instances, cooperating teachers will encourage you to try your hand at planning and lesson delivery. After you have secured permission to plan your own lessons, the next concern is, "Where do I start?"

Fundamental to quality art teaching is planning for lessons that:

1. seek to find meaning in works of art;
2. span consequential themes; and
3. address long-term, overarching ideas that will inform student learning now, as well as when they are adults.

Avoid stand-alone lessons that focus exclusively on skill development, memorization of discrete information, or "in the style of." Instead, consider common threads that tie lessons together, link to other content areas, and provide for multiple, diverse responses. One effective way to approach this method of planning is to consider Ernest Boyer's human commonalities as a framework of sorts.

The human commonalities, eight points that people from all walks of life share, imply that we are all more

alike than different. The human commonalities are:

1. Each of us experiences life cycles.
2. Each of us develops symbols.
3. Each of us responds to the aesthetic.
4. Each of us has the capacity to recall the past and look to the future.
5. Each of us develops forms of social bonding.
6. Each of us is connected to the ecology of the world.
7. Each of us produces and consumes.
8. Each of us looks for meaning and purpose.

As a framework for planning, the human commonalities will direct your lessons towards deeper art exploration that, in turn, contributes to better critical thinking skills across the curriculum.

Planning and Teaching for Meaning

Choose a human commonality such as "Each of us develops forms of social bonding." Artworks that show people at work or play readily express this idea.

Ask yourself: "What do my students need to know before exploring the works of art in the context of social bonding?" The answer is obvious. They need to know the definition of social bonding.

Begin with a pre-assessment activity that requires students to develop a definition of social bonding. When an adequate definition is developed, display the works of art that you have chosen.

Encourage students to apply their definition of social bonding to each of the artworks. Does the definition need to be refined? How effectively does the artist show social bonding?

When students have a firm grasp of how artists can show ideas of social bonding, ask them how they can show ideas of social bonding in their own artwork. From this point you are



Middle school students share a social moment in an art gallery where they both select the same work of art to explore. Similar to the two students, the artwork is of two people who share a social moment in an art gallery where they admire the same painting.

free to design a lesson that offers an opportunity for students to communicate ideas of social bonding.

In Closing

To put into practice the human commonalities is to let students know that you value them as individuals and as groups. During the 2008–2009 school year, the Student-Teacher Survival Guide will concentrate on application of the human commonalities and will provide insights into their effective implementation. 🔄

Reference

Boyer, Ernest L. *The Basic School: A Community for Learning*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1995.

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