

Wrap Up the Year with Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Pam McKnight

The last week of school...grades are in...the weather is hot...students are distracted...the other classrooms are all but packed up for the summer...what's an art teacher to do?

Creative Use of Donations

The following wrapping project kept my third and fourth grade students highly motivated and involved right up until the last day of school. It all started with six large balls of twine that were donated to the art department. Since I never say no to any donation, I said, "Sure, I can use them," then the wheels started turning. I also had a huge stack of donated fabric from years past.

I'd always been interested in the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, and with the *Gates* project in New York City in February 2005, I thought this would be the perfect time to attempt wrapping the classroom. I even had a few students who had traveled with their families from Dallas to Central Park to see the saffron artwork.

Getting Started

I showed students a PowerPoint presentation on Christo and Jeanne-Claude. I told them they were to transform and combine everyday objects found in the artroom into something new. This was to be a cooperative learning experience and they would work in groups of three to four students with the fabric and twine.

Learning from Mistakes

Since I wanted this to be a student-driven project, I gave very few instructions during the first class. After someone cut a hole in a large sheet and drew on it with markers, I realized a few guidelines were needed. We discussed how Christo and Jeanne-Claude always left their environment cleaner than they found it and set up a few rules:

- No wrapping of people.
- No altering anything permanently.
- Do not cut fabric or write on it.
- The only thing you may cut is the twine.
- No tape or glue.

Presentations

As I circulated the room and watched progress, I saw how beneficial this activity was. Students had to utilize higher-order thinking skills, as well as practice effective communication, and work cooperatively. As class came to an end, each group gave a short presentation and then everything was put back exactly the way it was found. Now when someone says, "You didn't teach the last day of school, did you?" You can say, "Oh yes I did!" ☺

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Students learned to collaborate by working in groups of three or four with the fabric and twine.



Students take to the tables as their creations get too tall for them to reach the top.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.

WEB LINK

www.christojeanneclaude.net