

FIELDWORK

NOTES FROM EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING CLASSROOMS

SEPTEMBER 2004

VOLUME XII, NUMBER 5

The Art of Compromise

BY JOZEPH ZAREMBA

IN THIS ISSUE:

Learning In and Through the Arts

Guiding Question:

How can we teach in and through the arts?

Readers' Workshop 3
By Alicia Lipscomb

Art as a Tool 6
By Susan Durkee

Florence County Chronicles 10
By Todd Worple

For more teacher tools related to this issue, visit our website at www.elob.org/publications/webarchive/v12n5tt.html.

Jurron walks around the classroom talking, playfully interacting with other students, and avoiding the task at hand. The eighth graders are working on their Project of Choice, which is designed to promote personal direction and incorporate what they have learned in art about materials, technique, theme, and subject choice.

"Jurron, what are you working on?" I ask, in an effort to refocus him.

He pleads, "Mr. Z, you know I can't draw! I just can't! You've seen my artwork."

"You can't draw, yet," I reply.

I understand his fears. Blank writing paper intimidates me just like blank drawing paper seems to intimidate some of my students when asked to create a piece of artwork.

At the beginning of the year many of the middle school students who enter my classroom at the Harbor School in Dorchester, Massachusetts, are excited to have art, while others seem already out of their comfort zone. The anxiety some students have about math or reading aloud is the same kind of

anxiety that other students experience when doing art. Each student learns by using different senses and different learning styles, so not all learning environments will be conducive to all students—even in the "fun" discipline of art. Some students might find that the use of line and color gives depth and understanding

continued on next page

Eighth grader Jurron Oliver used pastels to copy this Peter Paul Rubins painting during the Project of Choice at the Harbor School in Dorchester, Massachusetts.



EDITOR
Amy Mednick

LAYOUT AND PRODUCTION
Leslie Hansen

TEMPLATE DESIGN
Carroll Conquest,
Conquest Design

Fieldwork welcomes articles,
letters, reviews, journal entries,
and samples of student work.
Please submit entries to
amednick@rochester.rr.com.

Expeditionary Learning
Outward Bound
National Office
100 Mystery Point Road
Garrison, NY 10524
845-424-4000

www.elob.org

Expeditionary Learning
Outward Bound® is a New
American Schools design
for comprehensive school
improvement that challenges
K-12 students to meet
rigorous academic and charac-
ter standards. Our model is
based on 10 principles that
grow out of the experience and
philosophy of Outward Bound.®

Compromise, continued from page 1

to their abstract ideas, while others might need to map out their ideas before they can visualize what they want to draw. Other students must depend on sequential instruction and defined limitations. Still others might rely on active lessons that allow movement to work out their ideas.

The arts at the Harbor School have become an important vehicle to students who have different learning styles. Students who are not always successful in other subject areas find success in the arts by having a chance to express themselves and develop skills at their own pace. At the Harbor School, students connect and integrate content through a variety of artistic and interdisciplinary projects.

SCHEMA OPENS DOORS

For example, I work with sixth- and seventh-grade Humanities teachers on an autobiography project. Students create autobiographical postcards in which they express visually on the front, and in writing on the back, something personal that they want the teacher and students to know. Students are asked to share from their own textbook of life, allowing them to use their strengths as writers or visual communicators. Writing and illustrating issues of personal concern empowers students to be heard by teachers, peers, and adults.

By taking an already familiar format such as postcards (or handmade books), content can be expressed literally or visually and be built on personal experiences. The projects are then exhibited in the school's gallery for others to read, question, and share as a school community.

I use the same effective instructional practices as teachers in other discipline-practices such as detailed instruction, demonstrations, student exemplars, and the layering of skills and techniques—to establish a foundation from which students can work. Once dead-



Juan Vargus, an eighth grader at the Harbor School in Dorchester, Massachusetts, did this pencil drawing "Harbor School Stairs" during their Project of Choice.

lines, guiding questions, rubrics, and check points are established, I step back and allow the students to meet the criteria on their own. But, even with the most carefully planned lesson design, sometimes my intended ideas do not reach every student.

BEGIN WITH STRENGTHS

Jurron, for instance, needed a defined and limited focus to be successful. Was it possible to exchange his frustration for class involvement?

As Jurron and I struggled to find an entry point I noticed that he felt comfortable tracing. I normally do not allow students to trace, and I did not feel comfortable accepting tracing as Jurron's only learning process that met with success. But I decided it was a great place to start.

I still wanted Jurron to discover, experiment, and meet a challenge outside of his comfort zone that tracing alone would not allow. I also had to consider other students' complaints that no one else could trace. I was prepared to respond, "What is fair for one is not necessarily always fair for others."

continued on page 8

Readers' Workshop, Peer Critique, and Jigsaw

EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW PRACTICES IN BAND

BY ALICIA LIPSCOMB

EL... ELOB ... expeditions—I heard these terms for the first time last year when the Ronan High School staff gathered for an overnight retreat at the North Fork of the Flathead River in Northwestern Montana. As the new band director, I learned firsthand that these terms have to do with active learning.

Throughout our retreat, teachers became students. Expeditionary Learning school designers modeled practices for us, we had time to practice the new strategies, and finally we analyzed our process through reflection. We created a community of learners on the shores of the North Fork River.

As the overnighter progressed, I heard a lot of Expeditionary Learning lingo that did not mean a thing to me, yet. Each small group I joined patiently answered my unending questions: “What is crew? Readers’ what? Protocol, huh? Jigsaw how? Determine importance when?”

As a new teacher at Ronan High School in Ronan, Montana, all this new information overwhelmed me. I decided that to benefit

from these new practices, I would have to apply them to the band room. I asked myself, “Where will I start, and with what instructional practice?”

A WORKSHOP WITH MUSIC

When I heard about readers’ workshop, my initial reaction was that it would not apply because we do not normally read text in band. But then I considered how we read music every day. What would a readers’ workshop look like with music instead of text?

I did some planning and then actually tried it out with the students for the first time. First, I modeled how to determine musical impor-

continued on next page

Sarah Smith, an eighth grader at Florence Middle-High School in Florence, Wisconsin, did this illustration of *The Florence Mining News* for the class book, *Florence County Chronicles*.

*But then I considered how
we read music every day.
What would a readers’
workshop look like with
music instead of text?*



Readers' Workshop, continued from page 3

tance in a specific piece of music. With a piece of student music on the overhead, I showed my students how to look at the music, starting with the time signature and key signature. In a think-aloud I made reference to songs I found similar to the piece on the overhead. Then I brought their attention to the tempo and style marking, explaining how these are clues to how the music might sound.

Next, I modeled how to look at the notes and rhythms. I pointed out that most music is just a new combination of notes and rhythms, and we discussed how to identify any new note or rhythm. We then created an anchor chart of places to find answers to confusing elements of a new piece such as an unknown note, a new musical term or rhythm. The resources included asking the teacher or a neighbor, looking at the band book, or using students' own background knowledge. The students then identified problem spots and listed them on the board with the corresponding solution.

We recorded and posted the findings in the band room. The modeling only took about five to seven minutes. Then the students practiced reading four to eight measures by themselves and shared their results in pairs.

I have learned a lot since my first workshop,

I no longer tell my students to read their music. I model it, I refine their listening skills, and most of all I provide them with opportunities to share what they know.

as you do when you actually experience the plan in action. I have found that the readers' workshop really helps the students in their music reading skills and it does not take long before they are reading music well on their own. This exercise can be used at any level. It can be used with both beginning band students to teach them how to see more than just the notes, and with advanced students who are facing very complex music that can be overwhelming, at first.

NATURAL APPLICATIONS

Building on my first experience as well as ongoing professional development, I have been able to use several other instructional practices that were new to me. For instance, the band room is a great place to use exemplars. An exemplar is any recording of a professional musician or group. Listening to a variety of music is a natural way to model quality. Sometimes the music example is playing when the students enter the room. At other times, I use a piece to reference a musical style, a specific skill, or the overall balance and blend in a group. It is imperative to develop good music listening skills in order for students to understand music and apply it to their own playing. Visiting bands and individual professionals as well as student musicians also model live music in the classroom.

I have also frequently taught using peer cri-

ACTIVE PEDAGOGY:

LEARNING IN AND THROUGH THE ARTS

In Expeditionary Learning schools, art is an important vehicle for learning and for representing learning through products. In learning expeditions, students have the opportunity to create, perform, and respond to a variety of art forms, and to connect the arts to content. The visual and performing arts are taught using the same effective instructional practices that are used in other disciplines and every effort is made to give all students access to exhibitions and performances. The arts build school culture and student character by emphasizing authentic performance, craftsmanship, and risk-taking. Art enlivens the school building through the aesthetic exhibition of student work and student thinking.

Expeditionary Learning Core Practice Benchmarks

tique and tutoring. Posture affects the quality of the student's performance. Students are given a model for good posture. Then, throughout a class period, they critique each other's posture. The appropriate critiquing phrases are practiced prior to starting. The students pair up and take two minutes to play, while being encouraged to "sit up straight" by their partner. I also use peer critique to help students refine their phrasing and dynamics.

Student feedback must be modeled and practiced to make the students more comfortable, and to avoid general comments such as, "It sounded good." The jigsaw has also been a great way to introduce new material or to learn a new song. I assign each member of the band a section of the song. We develop a list of important aspects of music to identify. Each student becomes an expert in his or her section of the song. They then share their information with the rest of the band before we play the song. Students reflect on their performance throughout the entire learning process. A reflection sheet can be given to each student to fill out about their own performance, but it can also be beneficial to reflect on the overall group performance. I use a video recording or cassette as a way to bring a performance back. I often use a tape deck to record in class to help the students improve their critical listening skills. We revise, revise, revise.

Incorporating instructional strategies into musical instruction has been a gradual and ongoing process. I have found that once I understood what the new Expeditionary Learning practices meant, I could be as creative as I needed to be to make it work in the band



room. Using the practices has helped me become a better music teacher. Understanding was not the real teacher, however. Experiencing the instructional practices at play in my classroom taught me more than I ever imagined. I am encouraged to refine my own methods every time I teach. It is a constant learning process for me as well as the students.

We are in this together, and the key word is process. I no longer tell my students to read their music. I model it, I refine their listening skills, and most of all, I provide them with opportunities to share what they know. Inviting my students to be a part of the learning process has increased their confidence and independence. Community of learners is an Expeditionary Learning term I can fully appreciate and one that applies most appropriately to the music instruction in our band. We are, after all, a community of musicians, each with our own instrument, playing as one. ✂

Alicia Lipscomb is band director at Ronan High School in Ronan, Montana.

As his contribution to the *Florence County Chronicles*, an eighth-grade expedition at Florence Middle-High School in Florence, Wisconsin, Tim Jeffords illustrated "My Dad's Old House."

Art as a Tool For Understanding

BY SUSAN DURKEE

I would love teachers and students to believe that art is not a separate tongue. Art is one dialect of the language of learning, and like any dialect it has its unique flavor and expressive qualities.

I think it is a common perception that, for children in school, art is essentially non-intellectual; it is right-brained, creative, loose. When people talk about integrating art into classroom learning, they somehow see it as separate from the skills and thinking that are part of traditional academic subjects like language arts, science, or math. As an artist, a writer, and a teacher of both writing and art, I know that art informs and deepens thinking and skills in all subjects. We have work by masters to serve as great examples: Leonardo DaVinci was a painter who worked like a scientist; William Carlos Williams was a writer who could write cubist poems; M.C. Escher was a mathematician who saw pictures in equations.

When I took up writing and left off painting, friends and colleagues asked me if I missed making art. I found the question interesting because clearly they saw me as having given up what I had been doing when in fact, in my mind, I was still making art. The only thing that had changed was my medium and materials. In any discipline that one approaches creatively, there are commonalities: a vision or idea, thinking about how to give the idea form, setting up tasks, and following through on one's plan. There is the technical stuff, the hypothesizing, the figuring out. And once the project is underway, there is the inevitable rethinking when one encounters obstacles, an approach fails and another must be imagined. This is true if one is a scientist in the lab, a mathematician working on a theorem, a writer crafting a poem, or a musician composing a piece of music.

I would love teachers and students to believe that art is not a separate tongue. Art is one dialect of the language of learning, and like any dialect it has its unique flavor and expressive qualities. I believe art needs to be in the classroom all the time, in many ways to bolster students' analytical thinking, to help them grasp the process and value of revision, to train them to be flexible

and responsive to their ideas and their work, and to provide another avenue through which to understand quality. Two great examples of this concept in action come to mind—one comes from a college writing class and the other from my seventh- and eighth-grade classroom at Four Rivers Charter School in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

DRAFTS ARE NOT SACRED

The first instance happened in a writing class I was teaching during graduate school. The students were paired for peer response; they kept getting off task, shuffled their essays on the desk without really reading them, and they wrote minimal comments. When I checked in to ask how it was going, students complained, saying “I don't know what to say!” or “I wrote it the way I wanted to—why change it?!” As I watched them, I remembered a time when I was making a painting and had come to a point where I did not like what I was doing, but did not know what to do next. I put paint on and scraped it off again, rattled my brushes around, manufactured excuses to leave the studio. Finally, it became clear to me that I could go on wasting my time or find another way to move forward. I took the painting off its stretchers and cut it up into pieces. If I could not manage the whole canvas, maybe I could manage small parts of it! Taking it apart helped me to see better what was there on the canvas and I went on to make a new, much better painting that was inspired by one bit saved from the scraps of the first one.

This memory gave me an idea. The next day, I came to class with a bag full of scissors, some tape, and a box of business-sized envelopes. The students were astonished when I gave each a pair of scissors and two envelopes, asked them to get back into their peer response pairs, to exchange essays and to use the scissors to cut out the parts they liked best. These they would put into an envelope labeled *SAVE*. The rest they

would put into an envelope labeled *SCRAP*, and then, I instructed them to return both envelopes to their partners. They did not like it, but they got to work. Within minutes, they were carefully cutting out single words, single sentences, parts of paragraphs; they read intently, made selections thoughtfully, sorted and snipped. Even though what they were doing was “commenting” on their partners’ work, using scissors instead of words made it easier. They went home with their own envelopes to reassemble their essays into a second draft. The results were wonderful, as was the feedback about the process. I have since used this same exercise with my students at Four Rivers.


COLLAGE DEEPENS MEANING

The second example of art as a tool for thinking and understanding happened when I teamed up with Leif Riddington, Four River’s eighth-grade English and history teacher, on a project related to the book *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. After the class had read the book, he asked the students to make a collage that represented the condition of any one character, or that described any one theme they encountered in the story.

I created models of collages first, and the students critiqued the models to develop a rubric for what makes a good collage. Then we got to work. The students were inclined at first to simply illustrate the characters, rather than represent the condition of the characters, and many were stumped. What did it mean to represent “the condition of a character”, and how could that be done by cutting pictures from magazines?

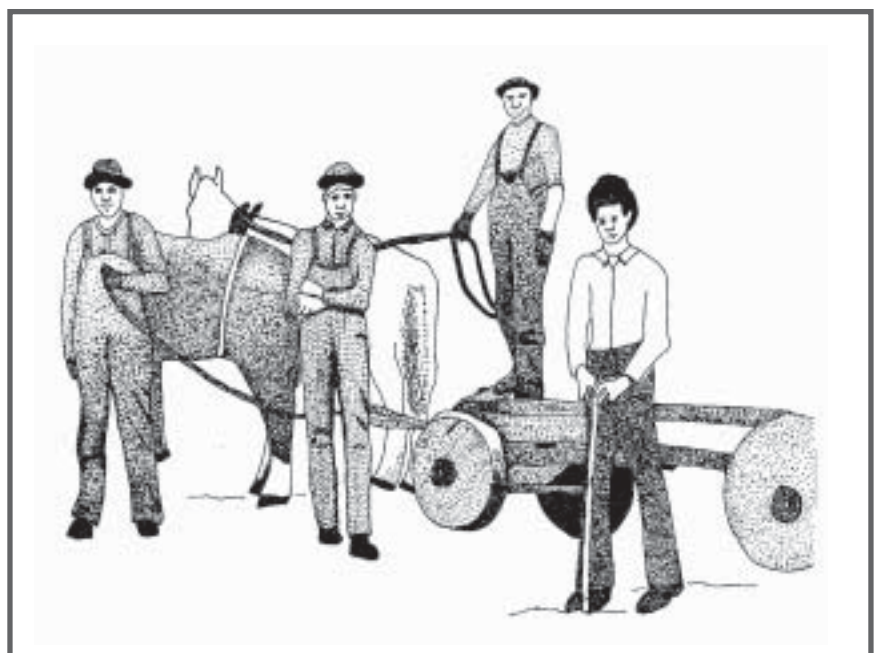
We asked them questions, provoking them to come up with images that conveyed the sense of a feeling. For example, one student said his character was trapped. He came up with an image of someone being compressed between two walls that are moving closer and closer together. He then created a powerful image to illustrate that. The collages were of high quality: carefully done, neatly made, and brilliant in color and composition. Each student displayed his or her collage with a short narrative describing who or what they were representing and why. The students came away with a deeper understanding of their characters and the book as well as a stronger sense of how many ways pictures can tell a story.

Art can be a valuable tool in the classroom because students who freeze when doing traditionally academic assignments are more likely to relax and become more engaged when “playing” during art projects. Likewise, students who have mastered the drills of academic learning begin thinking in new and perhaps more inventive ways when they cannot rely on the familiar forms of academic learning and must try their hands at art. This was true in both examples.

Some of my strongest writers made huge steps in their understanding of revision by using scissors and tape rather than word processing tools and copy editing skills. Some of the students at Four Rivers who squawked “I’m a terrible artist!” all the way through the collage project ended up making work they could be proud of and that clearly demonstrated what they understood about the story. Those who typically squawked “I can’t write! I don’t know what to say!” were able to convey what they knew through their images. It is critical to help students understand quality, and to think critically about their work. Art is an excellent tool for this and also for stretching students’ understanding of how many ways they can learn to speak the language of learning. 

Susan Durkee is co-founder and teacher at Four Rivers Charter School in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

Chelsea Butterfield, an eighth grader at Florence Middle-High School in Florence, Wisconsin, depicted her great-grandfather and fellow workers on the family farm for the expedition book *Florence County Chronicles*.



A STUDENT'S REFLECTION ON SUCCESS

"I had to do three to make the series complete.

I liked it because I like tracing and coloring because I am not a good drawer so I have a difficult time drawing. So Mr. Z had an idea for me to do a series picture.

It was hard for me because it took me a long time for me to do all those works and I had to be focused and determined to finish my work and complete the work.

I feel great about my work. I did it well. I used my skill of tracing and I think I did a good job doing my work because I was really confuse of how to draw , I always did it wrong. Now I feel proud of myself for doing my work completely.

What I learned from this assignment is that art is fun. Art

is something I could learn from and that I could do art, it is nothing to stress about it's just mostly expressing some of your emotions. I wouldn't change anything because this was an assignment that helped me to feel strongly about art."

Jurron Oliver graduated in June from the Harbor School in Boston, Massachusetts. His reflection describes how he achieved success after struggling in art class. The reflection hung next to his series of paintings at an exhibit at Wheelock College in Boston, Massachusetts.

Compromise, continued from page 2

Tracing would be the art of compromise that would engage and challenge Jurron while meeting the project's expectations. Without lowering the expectations of the project's criteria, I shared my idea with Jurron and he accepted the compromise enthusiastically. We agreed that he would have to challenge himself beyond tracing by showing understanding of the materials used by the selected artists.

Pulling out a series of large reproductions, I asked him to choose the three pictures. "Why three?" he asked.

"It's called a series," I replied.

"But why do I have to do a series?" he pleaded.

"Because I would like you to learn about the materials used by each artist you select."

EXPECTING MORE

I did not give in. Jurron went to work tracing. First, he traced a drawing by the 16th century Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens of a lion in brown, black, and white pastels. Jurron used pastel, observing and blending the colors. He worked hard, undisturbed, determined to capture every mark and color of each artwork. Encouraged by his first success, he moved on to reproduce *Gray Falcons*, a watercolor by the 19th century U.S. naturalist painter John

James Audubon. Jurron also used watercolor, learning to leave white spaces, blot excess water, let it dry so the paint did not mix, and take his time to accurately paint in the details of the original reproduction.

Jurron's last picture of the series was an oil painting of a white, trumpet-like lily by Georgia O'Keefe, a 20th century Southwest United States artist known for her close-up depictions of flowers. Using poster paint, Jurron now used thick white paint where in the watercolor he had learned to leave the white of the paper.

The compromise was working better than I imagined. Jurron met the challenge by beginning at an entry point that allowed him to take risks and feel successful. And, to our mutual delight, he turned out remarkable work. He also took pride in the fact that he became familiar with three artists unknown to him before this project.


REFLECTION

This newfound success helped when I asked Jurron to write a reflection on his work. Jurron once again began to turn off. He knew that his handwriting was far from legible and so his frustration began to return. Quickly, I arranged for him to write the piece on a library computer. This arrangement gave him a safety net and allowed him to take control of his work. He was willing to do the work, but

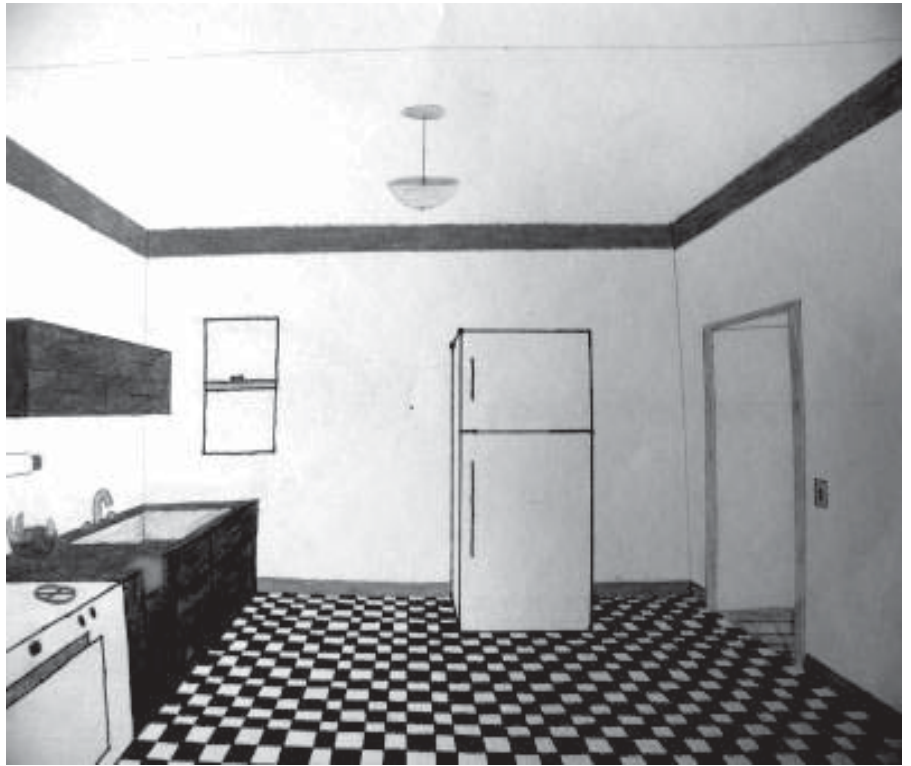
personally saw and understood, his limitations and frustrations that got in the way of his success (see sidebar on page 8).

Because of his stunning results and tremendous effort, we entered his series along with 25 other artworks from the Harbor School in a competitive art exhibit of local students' work at Wheelock College in Boston. The artwork would be professionally framed and exhibited for public viewing. Jurrón's copy of *Gray Falcon* was accepted. Having his own work exhibited alongside other Harbor School students, who Jurrón considered "good artists," bolstered his confidence and gave him a purpose for learning beyond the classroom.

Art should open the doors of discovery and bring students on expeditions that allow them to explore content, develop skills, and challenge ideas in a creative, nonconformist way. Finding that connection allows students the opportunity to become aware of their uniqueness. In teaching, I try to guide students to develop from their individual starting point, allowing them to build on their learning experiences and to become lifelong learners and not just learners for the moment.

Jurrón is not the only student whose learning style has pushed me to figure out how much I would be willing to compromise my own principles of teaching. I realize, from these experiences, that discovering how to lead students to be successful, rather than just expecting them to be successful, is one of my learning responsibilities. I must recognize the students' needs and only then, together, can we go beyond our comfort zone. 

JoZeph Zaremba teaches art at the Harbor School in Dorchester, Massachusetts.



Karen Pham, a seventh grader at the Harbor School in Dorchester, Massachusetts, drew her own kitchen for the Interior Perspective project.

RESOURCES

Abeles, Hal, Burton, Judith, and Horowitz, Robert. (1999) "Learning in and Through the Arts: Curriculum Implications." New York: Center for Arts Education Research, Teachers College, Columbia University.

California Arts Council. (2001) "Current Research in Arts Education: An Arts in Education Research Compendium." Sacramento, CA: California Arts Council.

Fiske, Edward B. (Ed.) (1999) "Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning. The Arts Education Partnership; The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities." The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the GE Fund.

Gallas, Karen. (1994) *The Languages of Learning: How Children Talk, Write, Dance, Draw, and Sing Their Understanding of the World.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Website

Arts Education Partnership: A national coalition of more than 100 organizations set up to promote the essential role of arts in education. The website includes publications and resources as well as links to arts education sites (www.aep-arts.org)

Florence County Chronicles

CROSS-CURRICULAR DRIVE FOR QUALITY

BY TODD WORPLE

Over the years, I have come to understand how people as individuals are connected to their environment. Take for example, gardening. In order to be a successful gardener, one has to understand how the weather has an impact on how things grow, how the soil needs nutrients for plants to grow, and how certain types of seeds do well in a given climate zone. It is through this interconnection of parts that we are able to understand the whole. We become knowledgeable in a broad sense. We see the connections that make us intelligent, well-rounded human beings, able to make inferences and draw conclusions based on these inferences.

Nine years ago, I approached our eighth-grade English teacher, Pam Smith, with an idea to produce a book that would integrate art, English, history, photography, and information processing. The end product would be a book about the people, places, and history of Florence County. I hoped the project would be a way to help build a better relationship between school and commu-

nity. Thus, the *Florence County Chronicles* came into being.

THE BIG PICTURE

To get the students involved, Smith and I set up an opportunity for the students to participate in a fly-over of Florence County with pilots from our local experimental aircraft association, Young Eagles chapter. During the expedition, this is the first step in generating interest in the book. This kickoff to our expedition captures our students immediately. With this aerial view, students, many for the first time, understand the “big picture” of Florence County. They see firsthand just how big the county is, and begin to get a sense of how they as individuals fit in.

A case in point is one of our students, Calvin. He was awestruck by the amount of forested timberland in the county. Back at school, he set up an interview with our county forester to find the exact amount of timber in the county forestland. He found out that our county forest was 36,296

acres and is composed of aspens, hardwoods, oaks, pine, swamp conifers, grasses, and shrubs. As a result of his *Florence County Chronicles* interview and story, Calvin became very knowledgeable about the forestland of Florence County and what it provides in the way of jobs, habitat, and recreation.

WHAT IS QUALITY?

To produce quality work, students need to understand what constitutes quality. When we return to the classroom after the plane ride, we like to show our students models of previous years' *Florence County Chronicles*.

“The Old Barn on Our Land” was illustrated by eighth grader Dan Englund for the expedition and book *Florence County Chronicles* at Florence Middle-High School in Florence, Wisconsin.



Pam focuses on the stories and I concentrate on the art and photography. In art class, I pass out a copy of the book to each student. As we go over the book, we do a random critique. Then we discuss an inferior illustration. After much discussion and questioning, the students usually come to the conclusion that it does not have the degree of detail that the other illustrations do. I might show the class two illustrations from different issues of the *Chronicles* and have them point out the differences. The students will then point out the attention to detail or lack thereof. By doing this, they get a clearer understanding of how to produce quality illustrations.

Throughout the expedition, I display well-executed illustrations by previous years' students on a bulletin board in the classroom. Students will go to the board from time to time to look at the artwork. By doing so, they can better visualize what constitutes quality. This visual connection is an important reference throughout the expedition. Students can see the spatial relationships and attention to detail that is essential to the overall quality of the *Chronicles'* illustrations.

A parent of one of my students commented, "How do you get your eighth-grade students to produce such quality work, when I can't even get my son to clean his room? I had no idea he could do such nice work!"

I would have to say that getting students to produce quality work is most definitely our biggest challenge. Many times, Pam and I get together to discuss how our students are performing overall. Eventually, our conversation narrows down to getting students who are not doing their best work to perform better. We talk about how to focus on their strengths.

CONNECTIONS

Take for example, Mike. Mike has done well in my art classes, but sometimes struggles in English and other subject areas. When it came time for Mike to do his illustration for the *Chronicles*, he jumped right in. He was one of the first students to complete the photography portion of the expedition and was doing really well on the pointillism illustration for art. One day, out of the blue, I asked Mike how his interview was going. He did not answer, so I asked again. He re-



plied that he had not done one yet and was not going to.

At this time, he had almost completed his illustration, and had done very well. I explained to him again if he did not complete his story for Mrs. Smith, his art grade would suffer as well. He looked at me and said, "I don't care!"

We then got into a big discussion on attitude and the overall quality of his artwork. I asked him why he would sacrifice an A- for a C- in art and fail English for something so simple as an interview and a story. I told him that Mrs. Smith would help him with the interview and the writing of the story.

I then pointed out to the rest of the class what a good job he had done on his illustration. He did not say much. When he left class that day, I was not sure if he would complete the interview and story or not. The next day, he came to class, got out his illustration, and went right to work. I made my way over to him and asked if he had interviewed his grandma yet. He looked up at me with his usual wide-eyed look and nodded his head. Our eyes locked, I smiled and gave him

Andrew Vassar depicted his grandfather's log cabin, which the family still uses as their camp, for the book *Florence County Chronicles*, an eighth-grade expedition at Florence Middle-High School in Florence, Wisconsin.

continued on next page

FIELDWORK

NOTES FROM EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING CLASSROOMS

SEPTEMBER 2004

VOLUME XII, NUMBER 5

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 878
Dubuque, Iowa

Expeditionary Learning
Outward Bound
Regional Office
1090 Alta Vista
Dubuque, Iowa 52001

www.elob.org



Expeditionary
Learning
Outward Bound



An approved
New American
Schools Design

Florence County, continued from page 11

a thumbs-up. I knew that this project was important enough to him to finish it.

Mike ended up with an A- in Art and an A on the English portion of the *Chronicles*. The integration of art and English allowed Mike to use his strength in art and

also do well in English. By succeeding in one, he succeeded in the other, which he did not originally perceive as one of his strengths. Mike had made the connection between the two.

Through integration of curriculum, we understand more completely how subjects relate to one another and to us as individuals. We draw inferences, we make connections, and we look at the whole as a sum of its parts. In other words, we become thinkers in a universal sense. We may not realize it at the time, but this type of knowledge acquired through integration carries on into adulthood. It makes us better at all vocations, even something as simple as gardening. ✂

Todd Worple teaches art at Florence Middle-High School in Florence, Wisconsin.

ACHIEVING QUALITY IN POINTILLISM

Students photograph the people and places that they write about with the school's 35mm Advantex camera. I make a black and white photocopy of the photograph. They use this copy to do their illustrations. I allow them to trace the outline of the form on the light table, but nothing more. The illustrations are done in pointillism—small dots applied with a black vision uni-ball® pen, with varying degrees of light to dark values. Along with the illustration, the photograph usually accompanies the story.

—Todd Worple