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# CREATING A TRANSFORMATIVE VISUAL ART CURRICULUM

by

Alison M. Marchbanks

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
Art Education  
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# CREATING A TRANSFORMATIVE VISUAL ART CURRICULUM

Alison M. Marchbanks, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2020

This thesis explores the process of creating transformative learning experiences within a visual art curriculum that emphasizes individual reflection, creative expression, and community involvement. The strategies and philosophies discussed will facilitate student engagement with big ideas and complex messages that will inform their social consciousness beyond their formal school career. Examples of how these practices are being used in K-12 visual art settings are presented to provide an in-depth roadmap for implementing a community-based, social justice learning opportunity.

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## **Literature Review**

### **Developing the Essential Question**

The role of an educator is vast. They are to be a caregiver, mediator, inventor, entertainer, cheerleader and advocate. Perhaps the most daunting role of the educator is that of a fortune teller; what will our learners need to be successful when they leave our classrooms? Educators are preparing their students to enter a world of the future that no one can clearly imagine. Our students will be faced with challenges that don't yet exist. To succeed in this incomprehensible landscape, the most important learning our students must master is that which is impossible to assess via standardized tests.

In conjunction with academic content, the most important things that a student should encounter in a classroom are collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity, and confidence. In order to teach these 6 C's, as coined by Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek (2016), students need something more than what can be found in a book, or on a computer; our students need to be involved in a thoughtful and caring community. For many children, the first and often the only place they will encounter a community is through their school, making it imperative to immediately model and include students as active members and valued in their learning community.

There is often a divide in learning between hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are clearly measurable and can be tracked through data collection to show progress over time. Soft skills, "refer to a broad set of skills, competencies, behaviors, attitudes, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals" (Lippman, Ryberg, Carney, & Moore, 2015, p. 4). It is easy to identify the soft skills that our students will need to experience success throughout their lives:

collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity, and confidence. However, it is challenging to reflect on curriculum and the state of education as a whole to determine how to implement the changes that will foster an environment and state of mind where learners will feel supported to gain and build confidence (Greene & Mitcham, 2012). While one teacher can make a world of difference in a child's life, this cannot be tasked to a single educator. Rather, this must be the work of an entire community. Through the utilization of philosophies of education such as social justice learning and community-based education, educators will be able to create opportunities that will build a transformative learning experience that will be capable of imparting knowledge and understanding benefiting the learner far beyond the walls of the classroom.

### **Creating a Culture of Caring**

Nel Noddings (1992) states that educators and schools will not reach “meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others” (p. 676). In their observation of Lincoln Center Middle School, Lynn Doyle and Patrick Doyle (2003, p. 259) have found transformative results in schools that prioritize teaching caring, but also modeling the following practices:

1. establishing powerful policies for equity
2. empowering groups
3. teaching caring in classrooms
4. caring for students
5. caring by students

In the integration of such activities into the daily classroom routines, procedures and traditions, schools will not only prepare their students to engage in an effective learning community but will more importantly help them gain skills that will sustain the students in their current and future relationships as they join other communities.

A truly transformational caring community cannot only exist within the classroom, it must also be asserted that for this culture to flourish, it must first be established among educators and administrators, then extended to include the entire body of community stakeholders (Doyle & Doyle, 2003). Teachers should feel that they have a stake in the decision making of their school community and be given ownership over their individual goal making and professional learning. When educators are given and trusted with such autonomy, they have been shown to be more invested in their role within the learning community and when able to empower their students, the educator also experiences their own empowerment (Doyle & Doyle, 2003).

### **The Relationship Between Art Education and Society**

Building a learning environment within a visual art curriculum that will foster and support a community that will effectively impart the 6 C's to its learners is no small task. In order to build such a community, the art educator must not only be conscious of their immediate school community, but they must also be aware of the broader community that encapsulates their school district. Desai and Chalmers (2007) ask and begin to answer, "What should the relationship be between art education and society at large?" (p. 6). They refer to posts on a higher art education message board where individual educators voice a full spectrum of opinions that echo controversies surrounding social justice education. The three most prominent arguments against a social justice curriculum in art education include the assumptions that 1) school should be a haven from the outside world, 2) it is an art educator's job to only create visually literate students, and 3) engaging in political agendas takes the focus away from the task of guiding students to create artwork.

### ***The Role of Public Schools in Society***

There are certain scenarios where a school should indeed be a haven from the outside world. Students should be able to arrive at school knowing that they will be sufficiently fed, safe from violence, and treated with dignity, rights that are not always guaranteed in their home life. However, it is irresponsible for a public school system, or any school for that matter, to not address the troubles that plague the world around them. “If schools [were] to...ignore the difficult realities of poverty and systemic oppression generally, students will be unable to comprehend the world with any degree of accuracy...Once students are able to describe their situatedness, they can begin to question and inquire into why the world is the way it is and why they are the way they are” (Haybach, 2009, p. 240). Providing students with a safe and welcoming environment where they can learn to question themselves, others, and the systems that surround them will not only promote critical thinking, but will build global citizens for a complex and competitive landscape where they will not fear to strive to build a better reality for themselves and the future. William Ayers, Education Professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago, professes that,

All schools serve the societies in which they’re embedded- authoritarian schools serve authoritarian systems, apartheid schools serve an apartheid society...But in a democracy, one would expect something more- a commitment to free inquiry, questioning, and participation: a push for access and equity; a curriculum that encouraged free thought and independent judgement; a standard of full recognitions of the humanity of each individual. In other words, social justice. (Manzo, 2008, p. 12)

### ***The Role of the Art Educator***

While building visual literacy in students is indeed an art educator’s responsibility, this must extend beyond surface level nuances throughout art history and its visual movements. It is the art educator’s job to prepare visually literate citizens; literate in multiple ways of seeing and understanding the world, including seeing ways in which art always has been used as a social commentary. Olivia Gude (2007) encourages art educators to examine their curriculum to see if



they are teaching content that truly reflects the ultimate goal of art as a form of communication: “Planning a unit on line and then deciding to add to it, the study of ‘cultures that use line in their art’ is unlikely to provide a complex, thoughtful approach to the role of art in societies...what is at stake is making use of the structure of the curriculum to exemplify the very heart of the art educational experience for the student, for the school, and for the community” (p. 7).

There should be a connection between society and school curriculum. An institution that allows the immediate learning community to be its only community is irresponsible, and cannot fully prepare its students to be active, global participants in the 21st century. This is especially significant because our students are already engaged with the world around them in ways that adults do not always immediately understand. Our students are aware of more than we think they are, especially with the access that they have to internet-connected devices. On these devices, and everywhere else in the world, our students will be bombarded with carefully crafted messages that are intended to influence behavior and ideas. Education, and art education in particular, should be on the frontlines of teaching visual literacy to equip students with the skills to expertly navigate the visual culture that surrounds them.

Great art often engages the most significant issues of the community, calling on each of us to bring our deepest understanding and empathy to our shared social experience. In today’s interconnected world, these themes encompass the global community. Students whose work investigates issues of real concern to them are more engaged in the learning process. (Gude, 2007, p. 8)

Utilizing meaningful and relevant examples of visual literacy and visual culture will pique the interest of students with various levels of enthusiasm for the visual arts, thereby providing them with student-centered opportunities to drive their own learning and transformation.

### ***The Myth of the Politically Neutral Curriculum***

“[Educators] have a responsibility for building classroom communities that confront controversy and take responsibility for creating a better community, one that values diversity and human integrity and fights inhumanity” (Santora, 1995, p. 21-22). This cannot be done without embracing the political reality of the education system. “Effort[s] to make learning spaces more inclusive does not mean indoctrinating our students for the benefit of [a] particular political party or side in the culture wars, but instead encouraging our students to embrace a politics of mindfulness and the interconnectivity of all humanity with goals of peace and justice” (Cartwright Lynskey, 2013, p. 4).

A politically neutral curriculum is impossible. Every decision made to include or remove a topic from the curriculum is a political decision. Even the way in which history is told has political motives based on what perspective the history is being shared from. Being open and honest with our students about this troubling reality is an important lesson that will allow them to begin to detect and understand the messages that they are encountering throughout their lives. Teaching through misleading lenses will not prepare students for the realities that await them outside of the classroom. Students can either be given “an uncritical, ‘neutral’ education that supports the status quo, or choose to empower students to question dominant ideas, possibly leading to social change” (Merrett, 2004, p. 93). Furthermore, in a visual art curriculum, exposing students to art that comments on various political concepts does not take the focus away from our task guiding students to create art, but once again empowers them to hear and tell untold stories, and detect and decode meaning through their own awakened experience by encountering new perspectives.

## **Social Justice Education**

“Only humans are able to achieve the complex operation of simultaneously transforming the world by their action and grasping and expressing the world’s reality in their creative language” (Freire, 2006, p. 68). The aim of arts, and art education, is to share this uniquely human ability which artists have harnessed to create vehicles of questioning, change and ultimately, social justice (Bastos, 2010). Dewhurst (2011) discusses that “social justice education” is a term often thrown around with many elusive meanings. Ayers, Quinn and Stovall (2009) identified three principles of social justice that Dewhurst (2011) has expounded upon, “[social justice education] is rooted in people’s experiences, it is a process of reflection and action together, and it seeks to dismantle systems of inequality to create a more humane society” (p. 365). It has become so common place for educators and educational institutions to state that they strive to prepare their students for the 21st century. Dewhurst (2011) explains the core goal of “social justice education is to transform the status quo- the fractured landscape of institutional discrimination, systemic violence, paralyzing poverty, and silenced opposition- into a world where men and women are able to be fully human” (p. 366). Instilling our students with the critical thinking skills and courage to examine the world around them to make that goal a reality is what is truly needed not only for the individual to be prepared for their role in the 21st century, but for the success and creation of a just society. Considering the big picture of the influence that educators can have and must have on their students and the world, pursuing social justice education cannot be a secondary mission, but a philosophy that penetrates all aspects of education.

### ***Social Justice: Opposition and Support***

Social justice curriculum engages students in the world around them and teaches them to be appropriately critical of society. When observing an injustice, the learners are encouraged to question the system in place and imagine alternatives that would bring equity to all involved.

Flavia Bastos, editor of a special issue of Art Education, the Journal of the National Art Education Association, begins her editorial with a quote from Elizabeth Garber. “Education for social justice is education for a society where the rights and privileges of democracy are available to all. Art education for social justice places art as a means through which these goals are achieved” (Garber in Bastos, 2010, p. 2). In order to stay focused on the mission of social justice education and serve as an effective advocate for the pedagogy, the social justice educator must be able to concisely explain what social justice education is (Dewhurst, 2010). Developing a solid definition will also allow the educator to distinguish between what is impactful and ideas or practices that, while maybe well-intentioned, are ultimately harmful and perpetuate injustice/inequality. Dewhurst (2010) reminds us that social justice education does not always need to be focused on topics that are “controversial or overtly political...(i.e. violence, discrimination, etc)...Rather, as long as the process of making art offers participants a way to construct knowledge, critically analyze an idea and take action in the world, then they are engaged in a practice of social justice artmaking” (p. 7).

As valuable as social justice education can be as a tool for a learner to engage in their community and creating new communities, there are continued arguments against social justice education. It receives negative attention because it is often believed to be a vehicle to promote liberal idealism. In 2005, The National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education had created a document of professional standards. Then, “in 2006, the National Council of

Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) removed the phrase “social justice” from [the] glossary definition of dispositions” (Haybach, 2009, p. 234) that are necessary to be an effective teacher and teacher candidate. Such originally mentioned dispositions included caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice (Haybach, 2009). Members of multiple organizations were a part of the document review that ultimately pushed for the removal: the U.S Department of Education’s National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), The National Association of Scholars (NAS), a deeply conservative think-tank, and the politically conservative Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), . These mentioned groups had each released statements leading up to the meeting, that expressed their distaste with the use of “social justice” in the document. They threatened that the NCATE would “potentially lose its authority to act as the national accreditation agency of teacher education programs if this dangerous phrase -social justice- was not abandoned” (Haybach, 2009, p. 235). The various collaborating education organizations were obviously threatened by the inclusion.

The National Association of Scholars, which regularly supports racist and bigoted speakers on college campuses, expressed their concern, "The NAS has had a long-standing concern with the mischief inherent in the use of an ideologically fraught term as 'social justice' in the assessment of students in teacher-training programs," said Steve Balch, NAS's president. "The concept is so variable in meaning as necessarily to subject students to the ideological caprices of instructors and programs” (National Association of Scholars, 2006). The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education followed suit with a broader approach, while still targeting their concern for the inclusion of ‘social justice;’ expressing concern that it was inappropriate to require teachers and teacher candidates to hold explicit dispositions. “The use of a ‘social justice’ disposition in particular, leads directly to the adoption

of ideological litmus tests for teacher candidates at education schools” (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 2006). The president at the time of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, Anne Neal, expressed similar sentiments,

The certification of NCATE [will] not be renewed until it ceases encouraging education schools to judge students’ commitment to politicized concepts such as “social justice” and “diversity” via evaluations of their “dispositions” ... The Department of Education should demand clearly defined principles which relate directly to a prospective teacher’s future success- namely skills and subject matter knowledge- not feelings, values and “dispositions.” (American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2006)

It is clear that the concerns of the organizations fraught with the inclusion of ‘social justice’ included in a document created by the group that oversees accreditation of teacher education were deeper than verbiage. The ACTA declared that they “will continue to fight taxpayer funded education schools... [that] are viewing themselves as activist institutions and are confusing social engineering with their job of preparing the next generation of teachers” (American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2006). The controversy surrounding ‘diversity’ and ‘social justice’ was now on a national scale, with leading education groups declaring that encouraging empathy, global citizenship and equity was too political, too activist. Removing such terms from a document’s glossary would never remove politization from the school system. In fact, the debate that resulted revealed that the removal was a politically driven agenda in itself.

At the time, the members of the U.S Department of Education’s National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), were appointed by Secretaries of Education Rod Paige or Margaret Spellings, cabinet members selected by President George W. Bush. The Secretaries therefore appointed their own committee members that embodied the educational outlook of the Bush Administration. During this administration, education reform goals and initiatives included No Child Left Behind, the favoring of vouchers and school of choice; “the general motive behind this “reform” movement was to dismantle and privatize

public education...those who claim to want to neutralize teacher education are by no means neutral themselves...their own “radical social agenda” is to de-democratize the role of public education” (Haybach, 2009, p. 237).

The debate and ultimate decision to remove social justice from the NCATE document is a representation of the broader history that encapsulates the conservative and liberal values beyond those tied strictly to education. Following the removal, then president of the NCATE Arthur Wise addressed some of the hypocritical aspects of the underlying controversy, “To most Americans, the phrase ‘social justice’ is positive and connotes values associated with the Judeo-Christian tradition. To critics of the phrase, it is negative and connotes a dangerous if unspecified social and political ideological agenda of indoctrination” (Wise, 2006). Haybach (2009) asks, “How should social justice be conceptualized, so that is it more widely accepted as a viable lens through which education can help students better interpret themselves and their world? How might we conceptualize social justice, so as to avoid its reduction to political indoctrination?” (p. 239). When examining our American history, it appears that social justice is, at its core, the embodiment of American values; to eliminate oppression and expose those that are the oppressors. We owe social justice for the most democratic movements in our history: the civil rights movement, the suffragette movement and the abolitionist movement. “Perhaps the most radical end of social justice involves the principle at the heart of the Declaration of Independence- equality” (Haybach, 2009, p. 241). It should never be a radical idea to have teachers in the classrooms that strive to empower their students and provide them with the skills that they need to succeed within the classroom and in the ever changing outside world.

## **Social Justice Art Education in Schools**

Desai and Chalmers (2007) argue that what they refer to as ‘school art’ is not a reflection of the outside artworld;

“School Art” is expected to be appropriately decorative, about safe subjects, and discussed mostly in terms of the elements and principles of design...art is often equated with recreation...Despite the image of the artist as a nonconformist, art programs reinforce conformity as much as any other curriculum area (p.7).

It can be easy to fall into a pattern of creating or supporting learning opportunities that reinforce conformity and overly celebrate technical accomplishments. Sometimes, because of a collection of factors, the conceptual achievements are too difficult and time consuming to draw out of the young artists and document. The benefits that I see to social justice education are growing, but once again Desai and Chalmers (2007) ask a difficult question: Can this type of education occur in schools as we know them today? Desai and Chalmers state that the most effective social justice programs tend to be run by organizations that are separate from the organized school system; community workshops or full functioning art studios. Are the school systems too afraid to address societal conflicts and stigma? Are the students coddled and overprotected from events occurring around them within the confines of the K-12 school system curriculum?

For better or worse, every student enters the classroom with baggage from their life experiences and questions about the world around them. The social justice pedagogy asks students to not check their baggage at the door, but invites them to explore it, be inspired by it, analyze and question it. Continuing to ask students to not engage with society at large can only lead to a flood of weak thinkers that display widely accepted apathy and disengagement.

Social justice education is a pedagogy that pairs well with art education and art history because it matches concepts that artists have continually been exploring. Throughout history, artists have been creating work in reaction to the world around them, often about ideals held by



their society and whether or not those ideals are upheld to standards that they should. Artists have and are exploring what traditions and systems are not best serving the population, and artists imagine what a better life would and should look like.

Social justice practices at their best should...awaken our senses and the ability to imagine alternatives that can sustain the collective work necessary to challenge entrenched patterns and institutions and build a different world...We also need to engage aesthetic and sensory capacities as to create and experiment with alternative possibilities- imagining what could otherwise be (Bell & Desai, 2011, p. 287).

It is an artistic strength to imagine alternatives- to design and redesign. Making the shift of encouraging art students to reimagine artistic decisions to reimagining the world around them is not an entirely massive leap. Social justice and community-based education highlights artistic strengths and ideas. When these meaningful visual and conceptual works are ready for presentation, an artist and/or the art educator cannot only create and display work that is working with social concepts, the artists must pay careful consideration to the presentation. The presentation process must be viewed as an opportunity for teaching and learning, but also to advocate for the strength of the artistic voice and mind, which throughout history, has all too often been cast aside.

In 2009, the artist Judy Chicago invited faculty from Kutztown University to help create K-12 curriculum content centered on Ms. Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (Nordlund, Spiers & Stewart, 2010). "Chicago's hope was that by engaging in serious investigation of the artwork, students would develop a consciousness about gender, along with a deep understanding of women's history, including the obstacles women faced as they struggled to participate fully in society" (Nordlund, Speirs & Stewart, 2010, p. 35).

When preparing for the arrival of the other invited educators, Nordlund, Speirs and Stewart (2010) developed fifteen principles to guide curriculum that focuses on complex artworks. These principles include:

- (1) start with students,
- (2) create community,
- (3) find ideas,
- (4) looks for metaphors,
- (5) extend the community,
- (6) encourage dialogue,
- (7) establish a safe place,
- (8) make room for multiple voices,
- (9) make comparisons',
- (10) explore contexts,
- (11) encourage inquiry,
- (12) guide practice,
- (13) be flexible,
- (14) reflect,
- (15) find support.

### ***Find Support***

When planning to bring a new artwork, artist or concept into a curriculum, it is advisable for the educator to begin by 'finding support' where they can share their thoughts and plans with a trusted administrator or colleague, especially when hoping to introduce a complex topic. The educator should be able to vocalize why the idea is important to bring before the students. How will this idea benefit the learning community and support enduring understandings and essential questions? Through the process of advocating for the work in question, the educator will develop a deeper understanding of the work, further preparing them for the integration of the new content within the curriculum.

### ***Starting with Students***

Once the curriculum has support and a solid purpose, ‘starting with the students’ allows the educator to better know their population. Understanding the needs and ideas of the student body should dictate how the educator will proceed with the instruction. Beyond getting to know the students as individuals, understanding the students' needs should include assessing their prior knowledge and understanding.

### ***Be Flexible***

The educator should also ‘be flexible’ because being in tune with the needs of the students means needing to be open to change the plan to fit with any unforeseen events or reactions. Taking the necessary time to learn of students’ backgrounds, personal experiences and prior knowledge will also make it known to the students that the educator values them as an individual and will aid in the creation of a meaningful community. Often the educator will find that in the moments where they strayed from the plan, in order to meet the students' needs and follow their passions and inquiry will result in the most learning for the students because they are deeply personal to their individual experience.

### ***Establish a Safe Place***

Individuals will learn best when they sense that they have entered into a supportive environment and a ‘safe place.’ In this kind of environment, students will be comfortable to share their ideas and make attempts to try new things, even if the attempt is met with failure. Creating this safe space begins with educator. They must model the attitudes and actions that they desire for their students.

### ***Creating Community***

In order for meaningful and transformative learning to occur, the students must be able to feel that they have entered into a supportive environment. Such an environment must be initiated by the educator and reinforced by the members of the student body. This community can begin by establishing common goals, exploring differences and building trust. When ‘creating community’, the educator should also strive to set expectations and procedures that emphasize the value of all students having the opportunity to have their voice be heard.

### ***Find Ideas***

As students begin to view and interpret a work of art, they will begin by seeing it through an individual lens created from their personal experiences. When new voices are shared within a group, the participants are bound to ‘find new ideas.’ Students will be able to respond to and reflect on the thoughts shared by others while learning of the often differing perspectives and experiences. Though the collection of ideas, students may begin to develop essential questions that call for deeper investigation.

### ***Look for Metaphors***

The purpose of viewing and discussing works of art should not be done for the purpose of reproduction, but as an exercise to find metaphors that assist in the understanding of difficult ideas and concepts. A metaphor is “a way of seeing one thing as something else, implying a comparison” (Nordlund, Speirs & Stewart, 2010, p. 37). ‘Looking for metaphors’ relates seamlessly as students grow comfortable with finding new ideas from new people and places and make connections to their own experiences.

### ***Guide Practice***

Interpreting an artwork requires the viewer to examine multiple layers of meaning. The viewer must consider the time that the work was produced, what history surrounds it, the life of the creator, the compositional decisions, and the viewer's personal perspective. Gathering all of this visual, conceptual and personal evidence is no small task. It is important to remember that not all students know how to intuitively interpret works of art, and that the educator must be there to 'guide the practice' and assist the student to build their interpretation. It is important for the student to understand how an interpretation of an artwork will evolve as one continues to engage with the piece.

### ***Make Comparisons***

As students become familiar with interpreting metaphors in visual art, they will be able to 'make comparisons' between multiple artists, a single artist's body or work, time periods, or how overarching themes are handled. The student will develop a better understanding when viewing and discussing a work compared the other pieces and ideas that were developed along a similar timeline. "Rich juxtapositions [between artists and artwork] can ignite discussions and encourage deeper investigations...[providing] rich contexts and a range of perspectives (Nordlund, Speirs & Stewart, 2015, p. 40).

### ***Explore Contexts***

Getting to know the events and ideas that surrounded and inspired the creation of a work of art allows students to interpret visual symbols in a new way. Making such comparisons will allow the students to make deep and meaningful connections and provide the students with new perspectives to explore contexts throughout moments in history.

### ***Encourage a Dialogue***

At some point the educator will find that conversation will not happen automatically, and they will need to ‘encourage a dialogue.’ Beyond providing prompts and activities to spur the conversation, it may also be helpful to encourage students to keep a journal that allows them to record their personal connections and reflections, possibly even make art in reaction. These documented thoughts may help build meaningful and personal dialogue in the learning community.

### ***Extending the Community***

‘Extending the community’ by inviting experts into the learning environment or traveling will broaden horizons while bringing the learning to life through increased connections (Nordlund, Speirs & Stewart, 2010). This will allow students to see their learning transform when they encounter their affirmed exploration in a new environment or reinforced by another voice. Beyond the reinforcing of concepts that will occur when extending the community, learners may also encounter new questions that challenge them to utilize their learning in a new way.

### ***Make Room for Multiple Voices***

As the students encounter new ideas and perspectives, they may need to ‘make room for multiple voices’ that they have not heard before. Learning that others have a different perspective from your own can be jarring, although a worthwhile discovery that will benefit learners throughout their lifetime. By encountering multiple voices, the individual student will begin to develop a rational that will support their own thinking, or they may discover that their

ideas should evolve. Another benefit to making room for multiple viewpoints is that they will encourage students to ask questions to build their understanding.

### ***Encourage Inquiry***

The educator can promote and ‘encourage inquiry’ to capture interest and inspire students to ask and answer their own questions. With the understanding, “the more we know, the more we want to know.” (Nordlund, Speirs & Stewart, 2015, p. 41), the educator should anticipate what questions their students may ask. However, the educator should not only prepare themselves to effectively answer these questions, but they should consider providing the students with the time and resources to research their own answers.

### ***Reflect***

‘Reflection’ is necessary for the student and the educator as they assess their learning transformation to discover where they have been, where they are now, and where they are going. “Purposeful, careful contemplation is necessary when unpacking any dense work of art” (Nordlund, Speirs & Stewart, 2010, p. 41), and different personalities may need to unpack in different ways and at different times.

### **Building Transformative Learning Opportunities**

Before selecting a social justice or community concept to explore, it is important that the artist chooses something to which they have a connection. How have you seen injustice play out in your own life? Bringing individual voice into one’s art adds authenticity that is valuable for the viewer to understand, and for the artist to be able to deeply examine the world that they are in direct contact with. Artists should also select a concept that will impact the root cause of

injustice that they have witnessed, not merely creating work that will address a symptom. In a classroom, I imagine the process of identifying the root of injustice an intense and impactful learning experience because so often the roots of injustice lie deeper than first expected. Dewhurst (2010) encourages educators to ask guiding questions that will inspire their students to be “both investigative (What’s happening?) and analytic (Why is it happening?)” (p. 12). Such questions will increase the artist’s consciousness on an issue and inspire them to see differently and see deeply.

Social justice education places significant emphasis on the process of artmaking, not merely the final product. The creative process, from start to finish, is a documentation of the creator’s knowledge transformation. Dewhurst (2010) says that during this time “artists are simultaneously learning and teaching about social issues” (p. 10). However, Dewhurst (2010) is quick to remind her readers that while the process is important, the product is as well. The work must exhibit the qualities we associate with successful art and cannot live in a vacuum. Artworks should be viewed by the public to begin to fulfill the intentions of the artist. This final product must be able to articulately communicate these intentions and the artist must be careful throughout the process to not sacrifice their conceptual goals or artist vision. Finding a marriage between these two can absolutely be challenging at times. Every component of the artwork must have a purpose, meaning, and should be a reflection of a greater purpose for the greater good. Critiques could play a huge role in this decision process and community transformation as students decide how to implement visual strategies. A critique could also be a place for students to test the effectiveness of their visual communication. Meanwhile, the rest of the students viewing the work and engaging in a conversation around it are bound to experience knowledge transformation, extending the reach of the initial artist’s voice.



For social justice and community education to be effective in the classroom, there must be trust. Trust from the students towards their teacher, and trust from the teacher to their students. Dewhurst (2010) also says that the educator “must trust that the processes of connecting, questioning, and translating will allow students to create final works of art that successfully achieve both their activist and aesthetic aims” (p. 10). The educator should be comfortable with the idea of relinquishing control and allowing their students to select a topic to explore that is personal.

Dewhurst (2011) proposes three lenses to use when examining an artwork to better understand how art within visual art curriculum is made with the purpose to transform society: intention, process, and social location. When approaching an artwork, consider the intention. Can the artist merely claim that their work is a piece of activist art, or should the work be created based on the foundation of actual experiences by the artist (Dewhurst, 2011)? Teaching students to draw from within their lived experiences will not only provide them the opportunity to unpack their own lives but will force them to examine their role within society, all the while lessening cultural appropriation and misconception. Process is the second lens proposed by Dewhurst (2011), focusing on the impact that is made on the creator, and their community, when one creates a work inspired by justice (p. 365). Art cannot be created in a vacuum, and when our students pursue a piece of activist art, they are examining the world around them and producing in reaction to it. The third lens that Dewhurst (2011) describes is analysis, “while it is often tempting to rely on external verification of the justice-based outcomes of a work of art to judge that artwork’s success, what happens if we examine how the work may also transform the artist along the way?” (p. 365). This question is particularly significant when measuring the effectiveness of an artwork created within a K-12 setting. These creations will, more times than

not, be viewed and appreciated by a very small slice of the population. The number of viewers and their reaction to the work cannot be the sole measure of the successfulness of the art.

Educators can work with their students to model and implement reflective practices that allow their students to observe their own process of knowledge transformation.

### ***Overcoming Challenges***

“Educators interested in social transformation are operating at a time when many schools’ curricula have become increasingly focused on high-stakes test preparation, potentially limiting students’ freedom to critically analyze and creatively contribute to their own lives and communities” (Dewhurst, 2011, p. 364). So much of the conversations in schools are unfortunately driven by how to improve test scores on state-mandated assessments. All of this attention limits the amount of time that can be dedicated to providing learners with legitimate learning opportunities that will allow them to become active and critical participants in the world around them. James Comer shared with John O’Neil (1997) that there is a misplaced focus on test scores as a benchmark for success because:

Many people misunderstand what intelligence is. Intelligence is really the capacity to gain and use knowledge to solve problems and promote well-being...the cognitive is only one dimension of intelligence. To be successful, one needs a threshold level of cognitive ability. But many other things are just as important: creativity, personal discipline, the ability to relate to other people. (p. 7)

Artists producing bodies of work that are driven by social interaction and commentary is nothing new. Dewhurst (2011) has however noticed that, despite obstacles and limitations facing educators, over the last two decades education curriculums are being more aligned with the ideas that contemporary artists are exploring.

Young people, [are being inspired to create] works of art that question, challenge, and aim to impact conditions of inequality and injustice. While these practices offer innovative outlets for young people to creatively engage in their communities, there is

still confusion about the defining characteristics of the practice of social justice art. (p. 364)

There must be room left in the curriculum for students to develop and celebrate their creative spirit. By encouraging our students to explore multiple ways to view the world around them, ask questions, imagine new possibilities, they will be able to exert the courage needed to create positive change in the world around them (Villani & Atkins, 2000).

### ***Community-Based Art Education***

Although commonly perceived in this way, community-based education is not education that occurs exclusively in the community, outside the walls and immediate concerns of the classroom. Community-based education is curricular content that allows students to make critical connections between themselves and the world around them and promotes meaningful observation of the area surrounding them (Chang, Lim & Song, 2013). With its focus on encouraging learners to make critical observations and questions the world around them, community-based education leads itself to the goals of social justice education. Bringing visual art into the mix adds a different level to which community may be extended; “Great art often engages the most significant issues of the community, calling on each of us to bring our deepest understanding and empathy to our shared social experience” (Gude, 2007, p. 8). For this kind of teaching to be effective, the educator must believe in the power of human beings to overcome obstacles through creativity and collaboration (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005).

Through art, human beings can acquire a more dynamic understanding of our world, plus important analytical, communications and vocational skills. We can reflect upon unconscious assumptions, take a stand for our beliefs and contribute to something larger than our individual selves. (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005, p. xii)

Community-based art emerges from a group of people that are actively working together to improve upon any aspect of their commonwealth.

Within a classroom, true community-based education should not be led by one individual; students should be involved in the planning and reflection processes, and participants should be encouraged to take on new roles that they may have never anticipated. The teacher's role within a community-based classroom is to model being a voice for the greater good. The teacher should, "Discover and develop each participant's unique abilities [and] coordinate and focus these abilities so the group can flex its creative muscles on behalf of the community" (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005, p. xix).

For students to become familiar with their community, they should begin by exploring its cultural codes: the signs, symbols, rituals, and stories that their community holds dear. It is difficult to create change if one does not have information on how their community came to be what it is today (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005). Such an examination should occur regardless of the scale of the community in question. All artwork will refer somehow to the cultural codes belonging to the community in which the art was created and no change could ever be enacted "if we simply marched side by side without growing together with common themes and messages" (Hirsh-Pasek & Michnick Golinkoff, 2016, p. 58).

### ***Deep Thinking Supported by National Standards***

The 15 principles created by Nordlund, Speirs and Stewart (2010) remind the educator to strive for equity and keep the process student-centered by including their personal experiences and examining their prior knowledge. The principles also closely correlate with the National Core Visual Arts Standards. The principles and standards are both successful at challenging educators to allow their students to make connections to a work of art, and then approach the

piece from various perspectives and contexts, by promoting enduring understandings and essential questions. These enduring understandings and essential questions, while fundamental for the development and success of any practicing artist, are also ideas that are worthwhile for the meaningful development of anyone in a realm outside of the visual arts.

Created to reinforce the role that arts education has in the contemporary common core curriculum (Gude, 2014), the National Core Arts Standards are organized around the four artistic practices: creating, presenting, responding and connecting. There are anchor standards under each artistic practice, and each anchor standard is written for each grade level to reflect how abilities will grow and develop from year to year throughout the course of an education. Accompanying each anchor standard are related enduring understandings and essential questions. The qualities of the National Core Arts Standards encourage educators and their student artists to move beyond visual performance, to promoting understanding that goes deeper than visual art content, with the emphasis on building strong and attentive thinkers and problem solvers.

“The Next Generation Visual Arts standards are focused on student choice and on students making personally meaningful works of art and design...Standards in the Create section support students in identifying their stories, ideas, and concerns and then choosing the best methods and styles to make works of art or design that explore this content ... the Present section encourage[s] students to develop their own valuing systems for art or artifacts should be saved and shared with others. Standards in the Respond section affirm that students will use their knowledge about art and images to understand various perspectives of other people and then to make their own interpretations based on their art knowledge and life experiences.” (Sweeny, 2014, p. 12)

The National Core Arts Standards is focused on a goal of providing opportunities, knowledge, and understanding that learners will carry with them into their future experiences and environments. This aligns well with the goals of social justice education and community-based art education, all of which are striving to extend learning beyond the classroom to have a

meaningful impact on the learner, giving them the skills and confidence to make learning transferable to their life experiences and their surrounding communities.

Community impact and connection is a theme that recurs throughout the national standards. Immediately in Visual Arts- Creating: Anchor Standard 1:” Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work,” there is an essential question that asks, “How does collaboration expand the creative process?” The grade level bands advance from VA:Cr1.1.1a, “Engage collaboratively in exploration and imaginative play with materials,” to VA:Cr1.1.IIIa, “Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creative art and design that can affect social change” (State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014, p. 1). Immediately, art educators are encouraged to introduce their creative learners to the routine of working and imagining alongside and then collaboratively with others. This skill builds from year to year as students develop more experience working with others, and a greater appreciation and understanding of the power that multiple individuals hold when they come together to creatively make change.

The Connecting portion of the standards requires students and educators to “[relate] artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external content” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2016, p. 13). Visual Arts- Connecting: Anchor Standard 10: “Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.” Here, essential questions focus on: “How does making art attune people to their surroundings?” and “How do people contribute to awareness and understanding of their lives and the lives of their communities through art-making?” (State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014, p. 8). As the standard advances through the grade level bands, students will tell stories about their lives, develop work based on observations of their surroundings, make art collaboratively to reflect on and reinforce

positive aspects of a group, then finally, observe, research and explore unfamiliar subjects through artmaking. As students advance through this standard, their work should grow from being introspective about their own lives and stories, then progress to tell the stories of others. Challenging the learner to, while still calling upon their unique experiences and perspectives, examine new areas, groups, ideas and histories through art making to broaden their horizons.

### ***Quality Communication***

After one teacher completed the professional development hosted by Nordlund, Speirs and Stewart, focused on Chicago's The Dinner Party and the fifteen principles, she returned to her classroom where her students deeply considered who writes our history. Her students each created persuasive pieces of writing, addressed to the curators of various institutions, asking for them to include more women artists in their collections. This activity reinforces the depth of artistic practices and creative thinking, because artists do not only make and view art, but also speak about art and write about art. Guiding students to discover an injustice such as how underrepresented an entire gender is within the visual representation of history is an immensely powerful learning opportunity. Then, the students were encouraged to use their words to constructively voice their frustrations in a way that could make change. This is a powerful lesson that will lead students to developing their own enduring understandings and essential questions of the world around them.

The principles created by Nordlund, Speirs and Stewart (2010) were filled with enduring understandings that can or will potentially benefit all learners, all of their lives.

Learning that diverse positions co-exist around an issue may be unsettling for some people and eye opening for others. Listening to what others have to say, even when it may be different from what we know or believe, allows us to weigh our ideas against

others, compare, build better arguments, or let go of ideas which we disagree or that we no longer need (p. 40).

With the explosion of technology, communication can now instantly cross far reaching geographic boundaries. Our world feels smaller and more connected than ever before. However, “When business leaders cry out for workers with better communication skills, they focus on two primary areas: speaking and writing. Employers assume all workers can use a computer, but can [they] communicate what they have found there? Speaking and writing are becoming lost arts” (Hirsh-Pasek & Michnick Golinkoff, 2016, p. 85). Teaching and modeling quality communication skills must begin at the earliest levels of education. To succeed in a community, members must be able to effectively voice their ideas and concerns. Social justice and community-based education provides a platform for exposing students to conversations where not all parties may agree on the desired outcome, or how to achieve it. Disagreement is an important aspect of communication that also must be taught and not avoided.

### ***Rigor and Relevance***

It is important to expose students to challenging questions, at all ages and levels of education. Elementary art educators are continually bombarded by ‘cute’ products that student after student reproduces with slight variations. Many of the products being inspired by pieces of art considered to be art history staples, usually are not challenging in subject matter or concept; student artists are asked to recreate well known compositions or emulate established artistic styles. The process of stylistic and subject repetition in a visual arts curriculum is a missed opportunity. Making this a habit will not promote the development and celebration of individual thought. The most valuable enduring understandings and essential questions that are vital to the



survival of a truly democratic society must be encountered repeatedly throughout one's education, beginning at the earliest levels.

Art appreciation has become a popular tenant of many contemporary art education curriculums, focusing on a brief and limited history of art that overtly emphasizes elements and principles of art and design. To create a curriculum that moves beyond art appreciation, Turk (2012) calls for art educators to enhance discipline-based art education teaching philosophies, which although becoming outdated, are still widely considered the gold standard in art education:

Art education in the US, despite the traditionally discipline-based approach, holds significance in the K-12 curriculum in its capacity to instill and appreciation and understanding of beauty and expression. Art experiences in the educational setting that are collaborative and inclusive in approach take the curriculum even further, as they are rooted in establishing cultural meaning, social values, norms and truth (p. 51).

It is important for art educators to foster learning and creativity that is driven and inspired by more than the elements and principles of art and design in order to prepare our students for the contemporary culture that confronts them in every aspect of their lives, constantly permeating through their education and leisure. Building a curriculum that goes beyond the surface of the visual art canon will encourage creative thinking and teach students that there are always multiple ways to solve a problem through multiple answers (Eisner, 2002).

Curriculum should excite and engage both the artist and the educator. If the educator is not eager to teach the content, the students will follow suit. A contemporary visual art curriculum should also be a reflection of the students and the world that is surrounding them.

The essential contribution that arts education can make to our students and to our communities is to teach skills and concepts while creating opportunities to investigate and represent one's own experiences-generating personal and shared meaning. Quality arts curriculum is thus rooted in belief in the transformative power of art and critical inquiry (Gude, 2007, p. 6).

All school curriculum should be a showcase of intellectual sophistication, regardless of the level. Throughout history, the arts have been a reflection of the era that houses the creator. Movements and styles come and go as society encounters new and changing questions. “Similarly, art education as a field will continue to expand and shift, incorporating new artistic practices and important contemporary discourses” (Gude, 2007, p. 7). Artmaking should not be spoon fed or strictly focused on compositional elements and principles, but instead should provide students with an opportunity to get to know themselves. Artmaking should be a process where students are able to flex their muscles to build on and explore their own intellect and inter/intrapersonal communication development. Artmaking should not be an exercise that is separate from the students’ daily experience.

### ***Examples of Transformative Learning Opportunities***

**Fashion Show Commenting on Local Issues.** Bastos (2010) writes of a real-world classroom example of social justice art education in action; ten middle schoolers were participants in an after-school photography course, called Kids’ View, that allowed them to interact with Cincinnati agencies. Visionaries and Voices (<https://visionariesandvoices.com/>), a studio and exhibition space, was holding a fashion show that the Kid’s View participants were able to photograph. Bastos (2010) describes the significant nuisance of this fashion show:

At face value, a traditional white-clad bride in the runway strikes as conventional. It is tempting to interpret any fashion show as a celebration of consumer culture, [seeing a model in a bridal gown] as the embodiment of glamor, women’s wedding fantasies and mainstream representations of marriage as a heterosexual union. However, under the surface we find nuance. This fashion show was created and carried out by people often excluded from the creative side of the fashion industry, and, therefore, it [becomes] empowering (p. 2-3).

The fashion show's inclusion of diverse models with disabilities, frequently overlooked by mainstream fashion, held even more gravity as it was occurring near a local election with the hope of raising awareness surrounding disability services that had been sanctioned.

The inclusion of visual art in social justice education has the power to make an even stronger vehicle of social transformation. The middle school participants were engaged with a fashion show that challenged the status quo and voiced awareness for those disadvantaged by the local government. For social justice education to be meaningful, it must be “personal [and] based on constant and evolving reflection about our own instances of oppression and privilege, as much as that of our students” (Bastos, 2010, p. 3).

Bastos (2010) concludes her editorial that highlighted the Visionaries and Voices fashion show with a challenge to educators to “shift from objects to relationships” (p. 3). Bastos (2010) then quotes Paulo Freire (2006) “[only humans] are able to achieve the complex operation of simultaneously transforming the world by their action and grasping and expressing the world's reality in their creative language” (p. 68). This translation of experience into creative language is the essence of what art education is, or at least what meaningful art education should be. In creating and supporting visual art opportunities that revolve around artistic processes, rather than a visual product, art educators will be able to support the significant connections needed to inspire learners to reject conformity, not only in their art, but throughout their personal lives.

**Demonstrations That Raise Socio-Environmental Awareness.** Social justice art education is often criticized for forgoing aesthetics in favor of reinforcing a message. This experience may be an example of that. However, the opportunity created for students, and their surrounding community was so powerful and resulted in significant knowledge transformation that inspired great momentum, that I cannot fault it. The educators and artists mentioned here are

creating objects often with function stressed over the form, but they are striving to answer this essential question in their work: “How can creative responses to social justice provide spaces to interrupt conditions of inequality through the guise of socially engaged art education?”

(Carpenter, Hitchcock & Schlemmer, 2017, p. 56).

Steven Carpenter, the chief artist of Reservoir Studio and member of the Collaborative Creative Resistance, has designed a collection of participatory public performances that allow the audience to be engaged in the creation of ceramic water filters. He utilizes these performances as a tool to teach participants about water scarcity and disparity around the world.

The filters [that Carpenter creates] are created with a clay mixture of approximately 50% clay and 50% saw dust. Once bisqued, the standard-size filters are coated with a wash of colloidal silver and affixed to a 5-gallon plastic bucket fitted with a spigot and a lid. The filters have been shown to be effective at rendering inert 99% of waterborne bacteria like e-coli. (Cornelius, Sherow & Carpenter, 2010, p. 30)

Carpenter is conscious of the spaces where he chooses to conduct his performances. By holding events in a wide range of locations, from the studio to classrooms to most importantly, other public spaces, he is able to encompass the broadest audience and include members that would often be excluded from such events.

Ross H. Schlemmer, Assistant Professor of Art Education, organized a Collaborative Creative Resistance event at Edinboro University to “demonstrate how social action and creative production can raise awareness of the global water crisis, and as a way for individuals to enact positive change through practical, arts-based solutions” (Carpenter, Hitchcock & Schlemmer, 2017, p. 58). Students were included in the performance-based demonstration and Schlemmer notes that the conversations surrounding the ideas discussed did not conclude with the workshop and deeply impacted the students. Conversations continued throughout the semester on social

media and between small groups of students. The scope of people affected by the information received that day went well beyond the number of participants that witnessed the event.

Carpenter, Hitchcock & Schlemmer (2017) describe a similar workshop that Erika Hitchcock, art educator, traveled to with 22 of her students. These students were so impacted by what they had learned about water scarcity and disparity, that when they returned home, a group of them organized a workshop to present to a community program for young girls so that they could continue to spread the message.

When pedagogical practices and their social impact are performed in concert with creative production, they become a form of socially engaged art education. Performances such as these afford students spaces to respond to social issues experientially, kinesthetically, and intellectually, and to uphold their rights as learners, creative beings, and concerned citizens of the world. (Carpenter, Hitchcock & Schlemmer, 2017, p. 59)

**Collaborative Mural for Community and School Improvement.** Turk (2012) describes the goals that Kong Ho and Michael Gow had in mind when planning for their combined art club and life skills class activity; bring together a group of diverse students to foster collaboration and inclusion, change the appearance of the life skills room, and inspire social change in the participants. Twenty-six art club students and eight life skills students, spanning grades 6th through 8th, met for ten hour-long sessions to create and implement a plan. Throughout the process, Ho and Gow operated as guides that lead the students through teaching practices that encouraged higher level thinking skills and problem solving. The students needed to utilize their understanding of visual art aesthetics and materials, as well as democratic practices, to design and divide labor throughout the process while making sure that all members were included, regardless of any disability. As a result, Turk (2012) describes that, “Students reported a sense of self-worth and school pride after participating directly in the planning and gradual improvement they created in the classroom” (p. 52).

The final result of the collaboration was a 9 ft by 8.5 ft mural on the wall of the life skills room that featured brightly colored human forms. Upon the chest of each figure were educationally relevant and real-world symbols that the life skills students spent time learning and interacting with; street signs, coins, etc. But the most valuable results of the mural collaboration was the time that allowed the students to “play an active role in making important decisions, especially in an inclusive environment, they [were] given the chance to develop self-esteem, empathy, and dependability. These values foster social justice, rendering art education a very powerful part of the K-12 experience in American public education” (Turk, 2012, p. 53).

Social justice education does not always need to be controversial. An educator may find it overwhelming to try to envision social justice topics that would inspire community collaboration and capture the hearts and interests of their audience, all the while remaining age appropriate and non-confrontational to meet specific community requirements. Turk (2012) reminds educators that a social justice curriculum can begin by teaching values that foster social justice. By building upon activities that teach empathy, acceptance and understanding at the youngest levels, this will prepare my learners as they grow older and become capable of more complex ideas and connections to the world around them.

**Inspiring Openness and Personal Narratives.** Rhodessa Jones, a dancer, actress, singer and playwright, was selected by the California Arts Council to be an artist-in-residence in the San Francisco County Jail at San Bruno, California. At that time, the California prison population had risen by 800% in the last 25 years, and Jones was called upon to establish a new theater company that would assist women as they transition out of the prison system (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005). The first course the prison requested Jones teach to the inmates was aerobics, and she approached the course with a philosophy that was divergent from the

instructors that were utilized by the San Francisco County Jail in the past. It was imperative to Jones that she found a way to make a difference and make an impact on the participants of her class, “ I want[ed] young women to meet their bodies with their minds through conversation, improvisation and exploration that directly connect[ed] to their lives” (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005, p. 21).

At the start of her first class in the prison, Jones shared her background and how she had come to arrive at this point of her life as a dancer and as an African American woman. She spoke of her passion and she spoke honestly, to the shock and awe of the participants, who felt culturally expected to keep such thoughts and stories to themselves. Jones then brought books into her aerobics class and encouraged the inmates to discuss the themes and ideas presented in the text, and to express the feelings that the text brought out of them in movement. Jones quickly discovered that in order for her students to fully embrace her curriculum and vision, she had to be as open and vulnerable with herself as she was asking her class to be. This opened up a new way of thinking and being for the inmates of the San Francisco County Jail; Jones was influencing the outlook and conversations that they were having throughout their daily lives.

When designing her curriculum and teaching philosophy there were four essential questions that Jones was focused on:

1. Why might people in a community resist participating in a project?
2. What personal barriers might get in the way of open communication?
3. What assumptions might you have about a community and its people?
4. What common goals do you and the people in the community share?

Knight and Schwarzman (2005) were inspired by Jones’ experience and essential questions to create a visual art exercise that was derived from the ideas of Rhodessa Jones. This art lesson combined visual art and personal storytelling with the goal of social change to build purpose and unity within a group. Knight and Schwarzman (2005) propose arranging a quiet learning space

that would provide the artists with room to move freely. The artists were invited to enter the space in a reflective manner and make themselves comfortable while they listened to a musical excerpt, envisioning themselves five years in the future. After some time has passed, the artists may begin drawing something using their personal visions and the music as inspiration. Drawings will then be displayed for the group to view. The artists will rotate around the room and take turns leaving written responses to each drawing. After the rotation is completed, participants may be invited to share their responses with the whole group. The group will then be led through a conversation on if and how the experience built trust and understanding. Were there any connections that were detected throughout the drawings and responses that were surprising?

**Imagining and Understanding New Perspectives.** Tory Read, a documentary photographer and writer in the Denver Colorado area, was working for the Associated Press as a photojournalist. She quickly became frustrated with the formulas and limits imposed by mainstream journalistic practices: “I felt like a tourist even visiting my own neighborhood...snapping the shots I needed...then leaving” (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005, p. 105). Needing professional refreshment, Read took advantage of an opportunity that allowed her to document an experimental community-based reforestation project in Indonesia. While witnessing and photographing a community working towards one unified goal, Read was inspired to use her lens as a tool beyond documentation, “Instead of just documenting it, how could I put photography into an activist role in the process? What if people used photography to identify issues, develop strategies and solve problems within their own communities?” (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005, p. 106).



Read returned to Colorado and began organizing a photography workshop through a community program and elected to focus on the Curtis Park District of Denver, Colorado. This area was known as a drive-by murder capital but Read saw potential in providing the community with a creative outlet to not only express their feelings toward their community, but also begin to better understand the outlook of others to build local unity. To start the class, Read visited the library and collected newspaper clippings that exhibited how the press had covered their neighborhood over the past hundred years. Just as expected, the participants in her class despised how the media continued to portray their community. Tory Read challenged participants to take their own images of Curtis Park, Colorado, and share what they each loved about their community, what they wished the media would cover more of, and what were some things in the community that they would like to change (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005).

When participants returned with their images, Read was delighted to see the wide range of dialogue that was inspired by what had been captured.

One of the photos that stood out from that project was of graffiti, taken by one of the teens from the neighborhood...Many of the adults assumed it was something the teenager loved about Curtis Park. But in fact, it was something he wanted to change. Suddenly things weren't so easy for the adults; they now had to rethink their assumptions about the young folks in the neighborhood. Here was a clear example of how photography could get different kinds of people talking who think they know everything about each other, but in reality, know very little. (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005, p. 109)

Read was continually inspired to facilitate and inspire learning opportunities that would challenge how the participants viewed one another and their surrounding community. When community members became more familiar with the process of seeing from multiple perspectives, it began to have diplomatic and effective discussions about practices that could and would result in meaningful change to the local area. When Read found two participants that continued to be in constant argument, she asked the class to become one of the subjects that they

had captured. The students wrote about what the subject would see and experience throughout the day (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005), further reinforcing the need of envisioning multiple perspectives in order to hold meaningful dialogue.

Within her community education photography course, Read was able to introduce strategies to the participants that broaden their horizons and opened their minds, all the while maintaining a safe atmosphere. But Read also knew that the transformation that occurred in their small population was not enough to solve the community's deepest concerns; to do this, the learning had to be broadcast. Read believes strongly in the importance of sharing and presenting her own and her students' photography. An artist's ideas should not be caged and only shared within the confines of an individual portfolio. An artist deserves feedback and validation for their work and ideas, and these ideas are only meaningful when they are shared in a way that will impact others to result in broader knowledge transformation.

## **Community Building Through Visual Art: An Event Roadmap**

### **Creating a Transformative Learning Experience**

This event and the corresponding activities were designed for a school system with a singular K-12 visual art tradition. The community embraced the district wide art show that had existed for twenty years; teachers, administrators and school board members were always in attendance. However, students and families historically only visited the week-long art show if their children had artwork on display.

The art educators in this rural/suburban midwest district desired to increase attendance for their existing art show while including more of the community and advocate for the inclusion of the visual arts within the school system. In an effort to meet these initial goals, the art educators organized an Empty Bowls event to hold in conjunction with their district wide art show. After the first year, the elementary art educators sought to expand the Empty Bowls experience to include all students in their buildings and create an opportunity to extend the art making process to district families and community members.

The surrounding small community that encompasses the school district has a history of valuing local rituals and traditions throughout the calendar year. Such “traditions can provide stability and a sense of togetherness...customs and celebrations that help create and sustain community” (Howell & Scully, 2008, p. 262). This year will mark the fifth consecutive Empty Bowls Project, which is held in conjunction with a K-12 art show by the featured school district. The Empty Bowls event has exploded in the community. After the five years of its growth and development, this community service project has become a valued tradition that is awaited by the students, staff, families and other community stakeholders.

In the elementary schools of the district, second, third and fourth graders are trained to create or paint a ceramic bowl. These classes are then responsible for teaching another grade level about the event, why we have it, and how to create a bowl. Community members and administrators are invited to participate in art class to also learn from the students. Teachers are invited to participate in bowl-making in their own private class, held before and/or after school. During the preparation process, some of our handmade bowls remained only bisque fired and unpainted. On the night of the event, for a slightly higher donation, families could select a bowl and paint it together. Families receive their completed work after the bowl is made food safe by firing in the classroom kilns. The donations collected from this event are given right back to our students through a program that sends backpacks of food home with them over the weekends. It has been important to art teachers in the district that the minimum suggested donation remain low, so that we can include as many members of our community as possible. The beauty of the Empty Bowls model is that it allows and celebrates adaptations to meet the needs of the organizing body and the unique needs of their community:

Empty Bowls- is a metaphor that virtually everyone understands...As John [Hartom, one of the founders of Empty Bowls,] repeatedly points out, “It was important that we gave the idea away.” They mean this literally, as they view themselves as “owning” the idea only for that one evening in 1990 when the initial idea for that first luncheon emerged. From that point on, the students, organizers and communities took ownership, making the event their own, by tailoring it to meet specific community needs. (Anderson, Coffey, & Dixon-Fowler, 2014, p. 1239)

For service learning to be transformative, it must be tied to curriculum (Zepeda and Langenbach, 1999). Furthermore, “to make caring a metacognitive activity, students must not only be cared for, but they must also think, plan, implement, and reflect on how they are involved in caring for others” (Doyle & Doyle, 2003, p. 260-61).

After identifying the big picture goals of the community service project, the educators then considered the goals that they had for the student learning experience. The community-based education and social justice nature of Empty Bowls appeared to be a perfect opportunity for students to encounter moments in the classroom that would teach and reinforce the 6 C's: content, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity, and confidence. For the event to be successful for the community and a transformative learning experience for the students, the educators needed to ensure that the students had ownership over their learning. Students needed to have the opportunity to have a role in the decision making and they needed to identify problems and address them proactively. Students needed to feel that their ideas, artistic skills, and their voices were heard. In order to accomplish the expansive goals set by the educators, they turned to the fifteen principles to guide curriculum that focuses on complex artworks, as developed by Nordlund, Speirs and Stewart (2010). Using these principles as a guide allowed the educators to continually refer to their big picture goals while breaking the process down to focus on the process and priorities needed to meet these goals. While utilizing all of the principles, there were some that continually provided comfort during the complex planning process:

### ***Start with Students***

The entire process needed to start with students. The educators had to consider their individual student populations when considering how to introduce the Empty Bowls concept. Educators belonging to the Title 1 buildings within the district approached the idea of nutrition equity in ways different from the school buildings that had a different socioeconomic makeup. The Title 1 schools had students with first-hand understanding of food instability; they live it on a daily basis. However, other buildings needed to take a different approach when introducing the Empty Bowls concept because these students were not as familiar with such a challenge. As the

event preparation pressed on, the educators needed to continually evaluate their students' engagement and enthusiasm. It was necessary for the students to always understand the power that they had for not only the success of the event but understand their power to enact change within their school building and the community that surrounded it.

### ***Extend the Community***

The Empty Bowls model automatically accounts for the learning experience to spill into the community, but the educators saw an opportunity for the community to extend in multiple directions. Students would be included in the teaching process by becoming leaders that would impart their learning to other classes of students within their school building, and to school district and community leaders. By never allowing the learning to remain in a vacuum, the educators noticed the natural advocacy that occurred for the Empty Bowls model, the nonprofit that the Empty Bowls was supporting, and the visual art program.

### ***Reflect***

For the event and supporting curriculum to be successful, it was necessary for the educators to reflect as individuals and as a collective team. Their mission had to be united in order to effectively communicate their message and advocate for the resources that were necessary to fulfill their goals. After the success of their first Empty Bowls, the educators once again continued to reflect on the successes and the issues that they had with the previous experience. This reflection process was only beneficial when each educator entered into it openly and honestly. Upon reflection, they were able to continue to develop and refine their goals for the upcoming year.

## **Empty Bowls Curriculum**

The following will, in detail, describe the instruction that occurs in the classrooms resulting in an expansive community-based art education learning experience. Throughout this event and its preparation, students will encounter opportunities for assessment, student created success criteria, peer-to-peer mentorship/instruction, visual art advocacy, social justice education, school-community connection and cross-curricular collaboration.

The lessons sequence begins with an introduction to the goals of Empty Bowls. The lessons that follow slowly build upon the learners' knowledge and experience with community and collaboration. The final lesson results in a large-scale collaboration activity that provides learners with the opportunity to take on a unique leadership role. Each lesson included in the curriculum is supported by national and state standards and will include a list of materials that are suggested to complete the curricular activities, an anticipatory set to capture student attention, and instructional guide outlining the teaching needed to prepare students for engaging in visual art practices.

### ***Concepts and Skills***

**Engage Students in Social Awareness.** Students will learn of the history of Empty Bowls and investigate ways that artists can make change in their community. Students will become advocates for food equity and understand the importance that full meals and proper nutrition plays in a child's physical and cognitive development. Students will engage with members of their community that are volunteers for food sustainability/equity programs. These volunteers will share why they donate their time to these organizations.

**Providing Students with Leadership Opportunities.** In the provided lessons, classes of students will learn how to create ceramic vessels to be sold at an Empty Bowls event. After

mastering this process, these students will be teaching other classes of students how to create the bowls for the event, allowing for all students to participate in the Empty Bowls preparation. Students will also be given volunteer leadership opportunities where they can personally invite school board members and administrators to the Empty Bowls Event and to their classroom to participate in ceramic bowl making.

**Assess Students' Understanding of Curriculum.** Students will be given multiple opportunities to share their learning to adults and fellow students on what Empty Bowls is and why it is important to their community. They will also be able to teach the various audiences how to work with clay to make vessels that will be sold at the event. In order to prepare to teach others the ceramic processes, the students will work in small groups to create their own order of operations and determine success criteria. The students will also need to consider their audience and arrive at age appropriate language and procedures to use when they are teaching others.

**Build Community.** Students will be working in small groups to prepare for various components of the event. The success of these groups depends on clear and concise communication, skills that are imperative to a flourishing community. Throughout the Empty Bowls preparation, individuals belonging to different parts of the school district will cross paths to learn from one another and make art together. All of this preparation will result in a large-scale art making activity during Empty Bowls, where students and their families will be able to glaze ceramic bowls together. All of these efforts and activities will be done in the name of supporting a local organization that works to feed low-income students of the featured school district by sending the students home with a backpack of meals for the students to eat over the weekends while they are away from school.



### ***Target Audience***

The curriculum featured is written for elementary-aged students attending a Title I school building, belonging to a mid-sized rural/suburban school district. However, the experience could easily be scaffolded to appeal to learners of any age. The goal of this iteration of Empty Bowls is not focused on including a specific number of children or participants, but on the combining as many communities together to become one united community for a common cause.

### ***Stakeholders***

In order to create a truly transformative learning experience, this unit strives to combine multiple populations by extending the community beyond the traditional classroom. The experience will include students, student families, educators, administrators, school board members, community volunteers and a nonprofit organization.

### ***Unit and Event Timeline***

This section details the instruction, communication and planning that begins eight months before the featured event that is held in mid-April.

September:     Research possible venues. Consider if there is a space for: displaying art, serving food, gathering space where visitors can eat, refrigeration, glazing, sound hook up, stage for entertainment.

Research charity that the event will raise money for and feature.

October:         Notify the charity of your fundraising plans (see Appendix A, Letter to Targeted Charity).

Reserve venue.

Order/collect materials for classroom instruction: earthenware clay, glaze,

hump or slump mold for shaping bowls, plastic bags, paper towels, stamps, or other texture tools.

Coordinate with colleagues to plan cross-curricular learning opportunities that reinforces the goals of Empty Bowls (Lesson Two: Advocating for Nutrition Across the Curriculum p. 61, Lesson Three: Video Commercials Across the Curriculum p. 66).

December: Begin ceramics units with the grade levels that will be responsible for instructing other students. These units should focus on the introduction and mastery of ceramic processes and procedures.

Identify what food you will be serving at your event. Empty Bowls typically provide a meager meal of soup or salad. The featured district utilizes a breakfast buffet of cereal and fruit. With this format, cereal can be collected and donated throughout the year, and on the night of the event, the only items that require refrigeration is milk. It is wise to consider dietary restrictions and have a stock of dairy free milk or gluten free cereal.

If you will be applying for grants through local businesses, complete grant applications (see Appendix B, Grant Application Sample Narrative) or file donation request forms.

January: Meet with collaborating educators to review your event goals.

Evaluate the furniture necessary for the event.

Place furniture request with venue, or begin process for furniture rental.

Research and identify what kinds of ceramic vessels your event will have and the processes by which the students will create them.

If you plan to have entertainment at your event, research options.

Reach out to musicians or theater groups to perform.

February: Introduce students that will be the student teacher leaders to the Empty Bowls concept. Engage students in the preliminary planning process (Lesson One: Introducing Empty Bowls p. 53).

Coordinate with a select group of students to appear at a school board meeting to invite board members to the event and to participate in an art class. (see Appendix C, Guardian Permission to Address School Board), The presence of community leaders in the classroom is an excellent

opportunity for the students to practice teaching before the large scale collaboration day (see Appendix D, Invitation to the School Board and E, Invitation to Participate in Classroom Learning).

Meet with building secretaries and/or administration to build collaboration day schedule, where multiple classes will combine to create bowls. Notify teachers as soon as the schedule is set, to introduce them to Empty Bowls and prepare them for the anticipated schedule change (see Appendix F, Introducing Empty Bowls to Staff).

Order night of the event specific materials:

Cups, plates, bowls, cutlery, tablecloths, serving vessels, centerpieces, plastic one-ounce lidded containers for serving glaze, glaze brushes, ceramic glaze, underglaze pencil, table coverings for glaze area, paper towels, water bowls, entrance tickets

Review ceramic procedures and introduce student leaders to the vessels that they will be constructing for the Empty Bowls Event (Lesson Four: Preparing for Empty Bowls p. 71).

March: Determine number of volunteers needed and the roles that those volunteers will have on the evening of the event (see Appendix G, Volunteer Job Descriptions).

Invite teachers and building staff, administrators and school board members to a bowl making session before, during, or after school. Student volunteers will be there to teach the adults the process.

Bowl Collaboration Day: invite a class of students to attend an art class with a group of clay experts. The clay experts are responsible for working in small groups to teach members of the other class how to create items in clay in preparation for Empty Bowls (Lesson Five: Collaboration Day p. 80).

Begin bisque and glaze firing. If you plan to allow families to glaze a bowl of their choosing on the night of the event, be sure to leave a significant portion of bowls unglazed.

If holding an art show in conjunction with the Empty Bowls service project, send home a letter celebrating the selected artists (see Appendix H, Student Art Show Invitation).

Send home an Empty Bowls invitation to all families and share the invitation with local businesses and offices (see Appendix I, Community Invitation).

- April: Send a volunteer reminder email with detailed job descriptions.
- Ask for all district buildings to feature the event on their marquee, newsletter and announcements.
- Following the event, transport bowls painted by families back to The classroom to apply clear glaze. Organize time when participants can pick up their glaze fired (see Appendix J, Bowl Check Out and K, Bowl Pick Up Information).

### ***Unit Standards***

All instruction occurring within a public school institution must abide by state, or nationally authored standards, to ensure that all learners of a certain age are encountering critical teaching and learning. Although the curriculum provided in this text has been specifically created for a visual art setting, the lessons within the units utilize and reinforce learning that occurs within other content areas. With the inclusion of cross-curricular standards, students will encounter familiar learning in the context of a new content area. This incorporation emphasizes the importance of prior learning, by allowing the student to develop an understanding that their experiences should travel with them throughout their school day and life, not only be constrained to a singular event. A visual arts curriculum is able to seamlessly integrate multiple content areas, as art and artistic practices permeate all areas of culture and society.

**Applying the Visual Arts Standards.** The following are a selection of visual arts standards (VA) from the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards. The standards utilized in this thematic unit represent the artistic processes creating (VA:Cr) and connecting (VA:Cn). “Artistic Processes are the cognitive and physical actions by which arts learning and making are realized...National Core Arts Standards are based on the artistic processes of Creating; ...Presenting; Responding; and Connecting” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2016, p. 11). The following standards were selected for this unit because they emphasize reflection and

the exploration and mastery of materials. These processes are critical for students to encounter as in this curriculum they will be engaged in teaching artistic practices to other learners.

VA:Cr1.2.4a Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.

VA:Cr2.1.4a Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.

VA:Cr2.2.4a When making works of art, utilize and care for materials, tools, and equipment in a manner that prevents danger to oneself and others.

VA:Cr3.1.3a Revise artwork in progress on the basis of insights gained through peer discussion.

VA:Cn10.1.4a Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions.

**Integrating English Language Arts Standards.** The English language arts standards utilized in this thematic unit represent the reading foundational skills (RF), reading literature (RL) and speaking and listening (SL) as found in the Common Core State Standards. These standards encourage quality verbal and written communication, skills necessary for collaborative work within a community.

RF.4.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

RL.4.3. Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

SL.4.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.4.1b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

SL.4.1c. Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

**Integrating Social Studies Standards.** The following standards are grade level content expectations created by the Michigan Department of Education for a social studies curriculum.

These standards are an integral component of the Empty Bowls learning experience, as students engage with the activities necessary to become a knowledgeable advocate. By encountering these standards, the students are developing their citizen involvement to further the public good.

P4.2.1 Develop and implement an action plan and know how, when, and where to address or inform others about a public issue.

P4.2.2 Participate in projects to help or inform others.

**Integrating Physical Education Standards.** While Empty Bowls is a community service project that features visual artistic practices, the model is at its core a tool for advocating for nutrition equity throughout communities. The inclusion of these cross-curricular physical education standards promotes the development of fitness knowledge and nutrition across the curriculum.

S3.3.4 Identifies the components of health-related fitness.

S3.6.5 Analyzes the impact of food choices relative to physical activity, youth sports and personal health.

### ***Resources for Supporting a Visual Art Curriculum***

The following are organizations that support the development of visual art curriculum, and service learning through an Empty Bowls community service model. These resources provide educators with avenues to advance, view and discuss best practices in art education, and encourage service and service learning.

**National Art Education Association.** The National Art Education Association (<https://www.arteducators.org/>) is a professional organization that includes art educators of all levels across the entire United States of America. The NAEA website allows art educators to

engage in visual art specific professional development, share and view lessons, and communicate directly with other arts educators through message boards.

**National Core Arts Standards.** The National Core Arts Standards (<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>) houses the content standards for all of the arts: dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts. Through this website, educators can not only view grade level standards, but see how the essential questions and enduring understandings that each standard are attached to are scaffolded across the entire career of the student. This resource also houses cornerstone assessments that model assessment in a creative curriculum.

**Michigan Youth Arts.** “Michigan Youth Arts (<https://www.michiganyoutharts.org/>) is a statewide alliance that advocates for arts education through access, opportunity and cultivation of artistic excellence for all” (Michigan Youth Arts, 2016). The organization fulfills this mission by offering an artist retreat for Michigan high schoolers, sharing resources for advocating for the arts, housing an extensive database with information on area teaching artists. Michigan Youth Arts also provides grants for Michigan arts initiatives.

**Kansas City Empty Bowls.** Kansas City Empty Bowls (<http://emptybowls.com/>) is a website that collects information about Empty Bowls Service Projects from around the world. Organizations share their event details, providing an excellent resource for those wishing to begin designing their own event.

**Blessings in a Backpack.** Blessings in a Backpack ([www.blessingsinabackpack.org](http://www.blessingsinabackpack.org)) is a nonprofit organization that provides school children with a backpack of food to take home with

them over the weekend. Blessings in a Backpack is an example of a charity that could be the recipient of donations collected from an Empty Bowls event.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture: Choose MyPlate.** Choose MyPlate

(<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>) is an initiative led by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Center for Nutrition Policy & Promotion. MyPlate is a nutritional visual that has replaced the food pyramid. This webpage contains information regarding each of the food groups, recipes and other resources tailored to a specific age group and audience, featuring an extensive collection of classroom resources.



### ***Lesson One: Introducing Empty Bowls***

**Objective.** By the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to understand the ways that artists can make a difference in their community. They learner will also identify different forms of visual advertising, and how messages and imagery change based on the audience and the platform that visual is being shared. With this knowledge, the learner will create their own impactful advertising image, that advocates for Empty Bowls and the charity that their event will support.

**Audience.** This lesson is written for elementary-aged students in a visual art class.

**Standards.** The following standards support student exploration of art materials and creative processes. Through individual and collaborative experimentation in the arts the students will develop ownership of their learning and become all the better prepared to teach practices to other students.

VA:Cr1.2.4a Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.

VA:Cr2.2.4a When making works of art, utilize and care for materials, tools, and equipment in a manner that prevents danger to oneself and others.

VA:Cr3.1.3a Revise artwork in progress on the basis of insights gained through peer discussion.

VA:Cn10.1.4a Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions.

P4.2.2 Participate in projects to help or inform others.

**Day One - Introducing Empty Bowls.** Artists will interpret visual clues to interpret what occurs during an Empty Bowls Community Service Project. They will explain the purpose, goals, and feelings connected to the event in a collaborative brainstorm.

**Materials.** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support collaboration.

- Computer
- Digital presentation platform (i.e. Google Slides, PowerPoint...)
- Video clip of news story featuring an Empty Bowls Event
- Pencils
- Permanent markers
- Butcher paper

**Anticipatory Set.** Teacher has selected a news segment that features an Empty Bowls Event. Capture screenshots of various parts of the event and display them for the artists to see. Ask the artists to share what they see. After an artist shares, the teacher asks the class, "What more can you find?" The teacher, or another artist can write down the ideas for the class to see. Continue to ask the class, "What more..." until they have accumulated a significant list.

Now, play the video clip that the images were grabbed from. Ask the artists what observations that they had from the still images remained true after seeing the video. Then, what ideas have changed since seeing the video.

**Instruction.** Share the history of Empty Bowls: Originating in Michigan. Lisa Blackburn and John Hartom, the creators of Empty Bowls, were art teachers for Bloomfield Hills Schools.

The Empty Bowls Project started serendipitously. We imagined it would be a one-time-only luncheon at Bloomfield Hills Lahser High School, in suburban Detroit, where John was teaching ceramics. After talking with the service-learning coordinator, who indicated that the district was running short of money for the annual food drive, John offered his students' help. Over dinner that night we considered options. We decided to challenge the students to make enough bowls to serve a soup luncheon to the school staff in exchange for their donations of money for the food drive. (Blackburn & Hartom, 2011, p. 20)

After lunch, the participating staff members asked if they could take the bowl as a reminder of the empty bowls on tables across the world, and thus Empty Bowls was born. Now occurring in

over fifteen countries and responsible for raising millions of dollars (Anderson, Coffey, & Dixon-Fowler, 2014), Empty Bowls has become a model embraced by artists across the globe to use creativity to raise money and awareness for food instability.

“Soon we will be holding our own Empty Bowls. You are going to have an important role in this event. You are going to be able to teach others about Empty Bowls and how to construct bowls out of clay that will be sold during our special event. Before we begin all of the work to prepare for this, it is important that you can articulate what Empty Bowls is, how it makes people feel, and how an event like this can help others.”

Roll out large pieces of butcher paper onto the classroom tables. Invite the artists to complete the sentence “Empty Bowls is...” in as many ways as possible. Encourage the artists to respond with words, sentences, symbols, or drawings.

***Independent Practice.*** The teacher may circulate the classroom as the artists collaboratively fill the butcher paper with ideas about Empty Bowls. As the teacher is visiting various work areas around the room, take the time to ask the artists what questions that you can answer for them about Empty Bowls, their upcoming event, or their role in the process.

After some time has passed, ask the artists to take a gallery walk around the room. Challenge them to look for ideas that other groups had that stand out to them. After the gallery walk, gather the class to reflect on what they noticed about the thoughts of others. Then ask the students what they are most excited about for their own participation in Empty Bowls.

**Day Two - Introducing Empty Bowls.** Artists will participate in educating the community about Empty Bowls by designing images to be published on web platforms.

**Materials.** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support planning processes.

- Computer
- Digital presentation platform (i.e. Google Slides, PowerPoint...)
- Pencils
- Drawing paper cut into squares

**Anticipatory Set.** Ask the artists what kinds of events they and/or their families recently have attended or will attend in the near future. Allow the artists to turn and talk, then regroup and have some share out about their events. Now ask the artists, "How did you or your family hear about these events?" Allow the artists to share. "Whether your family is attending a movie, church breakfast, sporting event, etc., someone had to organize the event and advertise that it was going to happen."

**Instruction.** "Can you think of an art event that is happening soon?" Empty Bowls. "Last time we were together, we talked about what Empty Bowls is and why we are having one in our community."

Place the butcher paper brainstorms from the previous session on the classroom tables. And allow the students to circulate around the room, remembering what Empty Bowls is and will do for their community.

Gather the class and ask, "What kinds of strategies do you think we should use to share details of our event with the community to ensure that it will be successful?" Allow the artists to rejoin their groups and list ways that we could spread the word about Empty Bowls.

Ask the class to travel around the room, looking at everyone else's brainstorms. After the gallery walk, gather the group and ask them to share their favorite ideas for advertising Empty

Bowls that their group thought of, or that they saw on another group's paper. Begin a master list of these favorite promotional ideas.

Social media will undoubtedly be mentioned. Ask the students, "If we created content to post on the school's social media pages, what would grab people's attention and make them want to learn more about our Empty Bowls?" Once again, record the artists' ideas as they share.

"Today you will be creating an advertisement that will appear on our school's social media platforms. The content that you create can be entertaining, humorous, etc., but it should also be informative. As you sketch, refer to the class list about what things would grab someone's attention." Provide the class with a list of pertinent information regarding the event. Remind them that their content does not need to include all of the given information but should just grab attention and make the viewer want to know more.

***Independent Practice.*** Release the students to begin sketching their advertisement. The teacher may circulate the room, asking each artist what pieces of information will be the focus of their content, and what they will be doing to grab the viewer's attention.

**Day Three - Introducing Empty Bowls.** Artists will critique outside examples of graphic design to inform their own design process.

***Materials.*** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support revision.

- Computer
- Digital presentation platform (i.e. Google Slides, PowerPoint...)
- Pencils
- Drawing paper
- Examples of poster design and social media event advertisements/internet banners

***Anticipatory Set.*** Before the students' arrival, cover the tables with samples of web advertisements for various events from a range of platforms. Gather the artists and ask them to pick out an advertisement that makes them want to attend a certain event or makes them want to know more about the event that the advertisement features. After everyone selects an image, break the class up into small groups. Artists will take turns sharing with their group, what is it about the image that they selected piqued their interest. After this conversation, ask the artists to all post their "interested" advertisement in a common location.

Now ask the artists to revisit the collection of web advertisements and select an image that if they saw it online, they would scroll past it and not care to know more. After their choices are made, the artists can rejoin their small discussion groups from before to share what is it about this image that does not hold their attention or make them want to know more. At the conclusion of this conversation, the artists can post their selected image in a common location that is separate from their first selection.

Gather the class and ask them to compare the two collections. As a whole, what do you notice about the images that you and your classmates said grabbed your attention? What do you notice about the other group of images? If the conversation does not lead there naturally, guide the students to notice the contrast in craftsmanship, composition, and overall design between the two groups.

***Instruction.*** Design decisions are a big part of advertising. Even if an advertisement is sharing about an interesting product or event, if it has poor design choices, people will not engage with it in the same way as a piece of well-designed content. Work with the artists to

develop a list of success criteria to determine what a successful advertisement should have before it is posted on the school's social media platforms.

Encourage the artists to consider their work from last week as a rough draft that they can edit. Nothing should be thrown away. All new compositions should be kept, because changes are an important part of the design process. It is important to celebrate and reflect on the revision process.

***Independent Practice.*** Release the artists to review their work from the class period before. Post the class created success criteria for them to reflect on throughout the work time. As the artists continue to develop their work, the teacher may circulate the classroom, asking individuals what changes, if any, they are making to their work during this session. Remind artists the value of retaining record of all of their changes. They are guided to celebrate the courage and insight that it takes to venture into a new direction or make a revision.

**Day Four - Introducing Empty Bowls.** Artists will reflect upon and celebrate the progression of their work throughout the creative process.

***Materials.*** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support revision and reflection.

- Computer
- Digital presentation platform (i.e. Google Slides, PowerPoint...)
- Pencils
- Drawing paper
- Examples of poster design
- Examples of social media event advertisements and internet banners
- Computers, or tablets with photo editing software

***Anticipatory Set.*** Welcome the artists and ask them what was discussed during the last class period. “Was there a part of our last class that was difficult for you?” Many artists may mention the revision of their work, and being asked to keep all of their papers, even if they contain an old idea, or something that they deem to be a mistake. Assemble the class into small groups or partners and allow each artist to take out their collection of papers, and lay them in chronological order, and reflect on how their ideas have developed.

***Instruction.*** When you have arrived at your final design and it meets the success criteria that your class has determined, then you will be ready to prepare your image for web publication. Walk students through how to photograph or scan their image onto a device and then edit it in photo editing software. Be sure to share functions that will address image brightness, contrast, and color balance so that the image will be easily viewable on a device.

***Independent Practice.*** Release students to continue developing their images. The teacher may circulate the room, individually asking the students to reflect on how their work is meeting the class determined success criteria. The teacher may also need to assist students with acclimating to the photo editing software.



## ***Lesson Two: Advocating for Nutrition Across the Curriculum***

**Objective.** By the end of this lesson, the learner will have evaluated groups of foods and analyzed how to build a balanced meal. The learner will determine deficiencies in their diet and design a concept for a healthy snack that would remedy this deficiency. The learner will also make ties to events and initiatives from other areas of the school, Empty Bowls, and develop a deeper understanding for their significance in the broader community and in their own lives.

**Audience.** This lesson is written for elementary-aged students in a physical education class.

**Standards.** The following standards support student learning of health practices that impact their quality of life and prepares them to become an advocate for food equity in their community.

P4.2.2 Participate in projects to help or inform others.

S3.3.4 Identifies the components of health-related fitness.

S3.6.5 Analyzes the impact of food choices relative to physical activity, youth sports and personal health.

**Day One - Advocating for Nutrition Across the Curriculum.** Students will classify and reflect upon the foods that they encounter throughout their day. They will be challenged to create balanced meals that will positively impact their growth and development.

**Materials.** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support individual reflection of their own individual practices.

Magazines  
Scissors

Glue  
Pencils  
Chart paper  
Large rendering of USDA's MyPlate  
Printed copy of USDA's MyPlate for each student (see Appendix L, MyPlate Document) (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015)

***Anticipatory Set.*** “Today you will have 5 minutes to look through magazines and cut out as many pictures of food as they can find.” Set a timer and allow students to begin their magazine hunt.

***Instruction.*** “Now that everyone has a collection of food pictures, we are going to sort and display them for everyone to see.” Share a large drawing of MyPlate by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. “You are going to sort the foods that you cut out onto this plate. You will see that it is divided into four sections; fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein. Next to the plate is a cup, labeled ‘dairy.’ You will set the foods that you cut out on top of the section that they belong to. If you find that you have cut out a food that doesn’t have a place on the plate, set it outside of the plate.”

***Guided Practice.*** Allow students to sort their food images. When they have finished, reflect on what they see. Is there one section of the plate that is very empty? Are there some sections that are overflowing? Do you see a lot of foods that did not have a place on the plate and have been placed outside of the plate?

Pass out a blank copy of the USDA MyPlate for each student. Tell the students that you are now going to tell them more about the plate, and what it is used for. Encourage the students to take notes on the plate if they hear some information that is new to them, because they will be doing another activity with the plate soon.

“This plate is a guide to help us know how much of certain foods to eat during meals. Did you notice that half of this plate is for fruits and vegetables? That is because it is recommended that half of the foods that you eat during a meal consist of fruits and vegetables. These foods are important to eat because they help heal our bodies.”

“On the other side, you will see that one quarter of the plate is for grains. Grains are foods like rice, oats, or things containing wheat. Grains give us energy. Below the grains, you will see a section for protein. This includes meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, nuts and seeds. Protein helps us grow muscles.”

“The glass next to the plate is labeled ‘dairy.’ Dairy represents all foods made from milk. We need this group of foods in our diet to help us grow strong teeth and bones.”

“All of the foods that didn’t have a place on the plate are sugary treats or salty snacks. These foods aren’t on the plate because they are things that should not be present at every meal. They are wonderful treats, but we need to be careful to have them as sometimes foods because these goodies contain energy that doesn’t last very long in our bodies. If we are not eating food that fills us up it will keep us wanting more and more.”

***Independent Practice.*** “When you were told to race through magazines and cut out all of the foods that you could find in five minutes, we ended up with a large class plate that wasn’t very balanced. Now you will have the opportunity to create your own plate that shows a meal that better represents the portions that the MyPlate recommends.” Encourage the students to take images from the collective class plate for their own, or they can revisit the magazines to find new food images.

**Day Two - Advocating for Nutrition Across the Curriculum.** Students will identify holes in their own nutrition and design a healthy snack that will help fill their nutritional void.

**Materials.** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and encourage students to reflect upon their actions and synthesize solutions.

Paper

Pencils

Crayons

Large rendering of USDA's MyPlate

Printed copy of USDA's MyPlate for each student

(United States Department of Agriculture, 2015)

The individual student created MyPlate meals from the previous session

**Anticipatory Set.** "Last time you had five minutes to find and cut as many pictures of food from magazines as you could. Then you all sorted them onto one large plate. Do you remember what our collaborative plate looked like with everyone's food on it?" Allow students to share. "We learned it is important to have a balanced plate, because all of the food groups on the plate help our bodies do different things."

**Instruction.** "You are a part of an event that is working to make sure that no one in our community has an empty plate." Ask the students what event you are referring to, and how it connects to the MyPlate. "Empty Bowls works to make sure that everyone in our community has food on their plate, and that they are eating a balanced meal to help them stay healthy and grow."

**Guided Practice.** "Today I want you to think about your plate. Is there a food group that you sometimes have a hard time getting enough of?" Allow students to share about foods that they forget about, or don't like to eat, even though they know that they are necessary for them to eat.

“Your challenge is to design a snack that would help you, and others have more of that missing food group on your plate.” Caution the students on filling their snack with too much sugar, because then their food will contain empty calories that are not helpful for our bodies. After you have your snack in mind, imagine that it will be sold in a store. What would the packaging look like? What information should be on the package to tell people about your snack and why they should include it on their plate?”

***Independent Practice.*** Pass back the student work from the previous session, to help students reflect on their plates and create their snack. The teacher may circulate the room; asking students about their snack and what messages they are including on the packaging.

### ***Lesson Three: Video Commercials Across the Curriculum***

**Objective.** By the end of this lesson, the learner will have selected an event that is occurring in their school or surrounding community and created a video that advertises and celebrates this event with others. The learner will collaborate with their peers to identify pertinent information and create a script that will share said information with others.

**Audience.** This lesson is written for elementary-aged students in a technology, English Language Arts or social studies class.

**Standards.** The following standards support collaborative student learning for the purpose of creating clear and concise content that will be used to inform others.

VA:Cr1.2.4a Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.

RF.4.4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

SL.4.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.4.1b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

P4.2.1 Develop and implement an action plan and know how, when, and where to address or inform others about a public issue.

**Day One - Video Commercials Across the Curriculum.** Students will work within a group to create a script that will be used to inform others.

**Materials.** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to work collaboratively to develop informational text for the purpose of informing others.

Pencils  
Planning document (see Appendix M, Video Planning Document)  
Computer

***Anticipatory Set.*** Ask the students, “Is there something happening in our school or community that you are an expert on? Or is there something that will be happening in our school or community that you would like to become an expert on?”

***Instruction.*** “Today you are going to work with a group to create a commercial that will advertise an event that will be occurring in our school or community.”

***Guided Practice.*** “After you and your group members identify your event, you will work together to write a script that will contain all of the content for your commercial.” Ask the class what are some questions that an informative event commercial will answer? If needed, guide the students to identify:

What is the event?  
Date/Time  
Location  
Purpose  
Cost

After group members have answered these questions on the provided paper (on page \_), then the students may begin writing their commercial scripts. Encourage them to also be thinking about what roles each group member will play during the filming. Will they be the camera operator, speaker, background actor?

***Independent Practice.*** Release the groups to begin the event selection process. Once the decision is made, the teacher may need to assist students in the beginning stages of event research.

**Day Two - Video Commercials Across the Curriculum.** Students will critique the outside work of others and use their observations to guide their own process. Students will also create and utilize a plan to direct their work.

***Materials.*** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to work collaboratively to develop and share informational text for the purpose of informing others. These materials will also support student reflection and revision.

Pencil  
Paper  
Computer  
Video Camera  
Tripod

***Anticipatory Set.*** Remind the students that they are working in a group to create a commercial about a community event of their choice. Present a local event commercial for the class to view. Ask the students to critique the commercial; what was successful and what could have been more successful? Does seeing another person's work give them any ideas of things to change in their own work?

***Instruction.*** After a group has completed their script, they are to share their work with the teacher before beginning to film. Ask the class, "When you bring me your script for final approval, what do you think I am looking for?" If necessary, guide the students to identify their roles within the group and the following information included in their script:

What is the event?  
Date/Time  
Location  
Purpose  
Cost



***Guided Practice.*** Walk the students through the necessary camera functions and the purpose of a tripod, before releasing them to begin their independent practice so they will be prepared for the filming process.

***Independent Practice.*** While waiting for groups to bring their scripts to you for approval, circulate the room, checking to see if the students are creating a complete and informative script.

**Day Three - Video Commercials Across the Curriculum.** Students will utilize editing software to complete their plan.

***Materials.*** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to work collaboratively to develop and share informational text for the purpose of informing others. These materials will also support student reflection and revision.

- Computer
- Video Camera
- Tripod
- Video editing software

***Anticipatory Set.*** Ask the class who can recall what learning occurred during the last session? After the project has been summarized, ask if there are any groups that would like to share out about their event or filming thus far?

***Instruction.*** Remind the class of the camera functions, mentioned during the previous session, should anyone still be filming. Next, walk the class through importing their footage to the video editing software, and basic editing functions.

***Guided Practice.*** The teacher may circulate the room, assisting with the editing process.

***Independent Practice.*** When groups complete their commercial, they may present their video for the class to view. The teacher may also share the finished videos with the school administration or the organizer of the featured event. Ask if the student work can be published on the school website, social media, or played during the school's announcements.

### ***Lesson Four: Preparing for Empty Bowls***

**Objective.** By the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to create coils that will form a sturdy vessel that is conducive for food handling. The learner will also identify upon their own strengths and weaknesses when working with others. This personal reflection will prepare the learner to collaborate to develop a lesson for a group of younger students. The group will create success criteria and teaching strategies in preparation for their teaching opportunity. The culmination of this lesson will result in two classes of students coming together: one a group of student leaders that will teach the other class how to create a bowl for the upcoming Empty Bowls event.

**Audience.** This lesson is written for elementary aged students in a visual art class.

**Standards.** The following standards support student exploration of art materials and creative processes. Through individual and collaborative experimentation in the arts the students will develop ownership of their learning and become all the better prepared to teach practices to other students. Students will also reflect on artistic practices to create success criteria and determine division of labor.

VA:Cr1.2.4a Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.

VA:Cr2.1.4a Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.

VA:Cr2.2.4a When making works of art, utilize and care for materials, tools, and equipment in a manner that prevents danger to oneself and others.

SL.4.1b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles

SL.4.1c. Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

P4.2.1 Develop and implement an action plan and know how, when, and where to address or inform others about a public issue.

P4.2.2 Participate in projects to help or inform others.

**Day One - Preparing for Empty Bowls.** Artists will engage in a teambuilding activity that will introduce them to art materials and will prompt the artists to reflect on their actions within said team.

**Materials.** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support collaboration and intrapersonal reflection.

Clay  
Table covering, or clay work surface  
Timer  
Camera

**Anticipatory Set.** "When you think of a race, an art activity is probably not the first thing to pop into your mind. Today you are going to work in groups to see who can create the tallest structure out of clay."

There are a few rules for this activity:

1. Your structure must be made entirely out of coils (demonstrate to the group how to roll a coil).
2. Your structure must be free standing, meaning that there can be nothing that helps hold it up.
3. You will have 15 minutes to work together as a group.

***Independent Practice.*** Release the artists to gather their materials and begin their group coil construction. The teacher may circulate the room, checking that all groups are following the rules.

***Instruction.*** When the time is up, ask all artists to remove their hands from the clay. The teacher may measure the height of each of the structures. In preparation for the next lesson, take photographs of the structures. Announce which group met all of the requirements and created the tallest structure in the allotted time.

Share with the class that they are now going to meet with a different group of people to reflect on their building experience. They are to think about what went well and what they would have liked to have changed. The challenging part of this reflection is that they are not to reflect on the actions of others but only their own actions. What did *you* do well as an individual during this exercise? What would you like to change about your individual choices and behaviors during the exercise? Reiterate that they are not discussing the actions of others, only their own actions. Allow the artists to join their new group for the discussion.

***Guided Practice.*** After the groups have wrapped up their reflection, gather the class to ask, “What was the purpose of asking you to only reflect on your own behaviors, and not on the choices and behaviors of your classmates?” Allow for the artists to think and share out.

“As we prepare for our Empty Bowls, you will be working with many other people to meet a goal and create change in our community. Working with others can be difficult. There will be things that you will find frustrating with the people that you are working with. There will be things about people that you will want to change. You can guide and model choices for those

around you, but you will never be able to control the choices or attitudes of others. All you can do is control yourself and how you approach a situation.”

**Day Two - Preparing for Empty Bowls.** Artists will evaluate their collaborative work from the previous class session to see if it would function in a different area. Artists will then encounter familiar materials, with a renewed focus and attention to detail.

**Materials.** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day’s lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support collaboration and reflection.

- Clay
- Table covering, or clay work surface
- Photographs of the clay structures from the previous lesson

**Anticipatory Set.** Photographs of the coil structures made during the previous session are posted for the class to see. Ask the artists to think and share what learning they recall when looking at these images.

**Instruction.** Summarize the objectives from the previous class time; “last time we were together, you were asked to work as a group to attempt to create the tallest free-standing structure made from coils. Then you also reflected on your own behaviors when working with a group, and we discussed how important it is to remember that you cannot control or change the behavior of others, you can only control or change yourself.”

“Soon you will be creating coil bowls that will be sold during our Empty Bowls event. What kinds of things do you think the visitors to Empty Bowls will be looking for when they pick out their bowl? Do you think the coil structures that we created last time are appropriate for

Empty Bowls?” Record the ideas that are shared with the class. Guide the students to discuss quality and craftsmanship, in particular, the importance of vessels that are able to hold food and safe for eating.

***Guided Practice.*** After creating some basic parameters for success criteria, model procedures for creating a coil bowl. Emphasize the aspects that are needed to ensure that the bowl will be food safe; coils are smooth and the spaces between coils are sealed to prevent leaks and will not harbor bacteria.

***Independent Practice.*** Release the artists to break into groups to practice their bowl making. Encourage each group to work together on one bowl at a time. When that bowl is complete, and meets the success criteria created by the class, the group can begin another. The teacher may circulate the room, asking guiding questions that prompt the groups to reflect on their quality, craftsmanship, and group communication.

**Day Three - Preparing for Empty Bowls.** Artists will define what constitutes a successful piece of functional art. Student-created success criteria will be used to continually inform artmaking.

***Materials.*** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day’s lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support collaboration and reflection to determine success criteria for a piece of visual art.

Clay  
Table covering, or clay work surface  
Pencils  
Paper

***Anticipatory Set.*** Gather the artists around a table, share with them that before they are breaking back into their groups, they are going to review the routines that we discussed last time for creating a clay bowl. Ask the student to your right what is the first step for making a bowl? The artist will share with you the first thing that will need to be done; example, collect a clay work surface. You will collect the work surface and pass it to the artist to the right of you. Now, ask the artist to the right of them what the second step is; example, collect a piece of clay. The first artist will go collect the necessary piece of clay and pass it to the artist next to them. This process will continue, an artist identifying the next step, and their neighbor completing the suggested step, until the bowl has been constructed.

***Instruction.*** Refer to the success criteria created last week as a class. “Soon, you will have the opportunity to share what you know about Empty Bowls and working with clay. You will be teaching a group of younger artists how to create a bowl for Empty Bowls. Today, before practicing as a group with clay for a second time, you and your group members are going to determine your own success criteria that you will be sharing with the young artists that you will be teaching.” Ask the groups to share their success criteria with you, the teacher, before collecting their clay materials.

***Guided Practice.*** As the groups complete their success criteria, they will bring their document to you. Discuss the items that the artists included, guiding them to notice if there are any pertinent ideas that are missing. When it is clear that a group has developed a comprehensive list of success criteria, welcome them to gather their materials and resume practicing their bowl making.



***Independent Practice.*** While the artists are once again working in groups to practice creating a bowl for Empty Bowls, the teacher may circulate the room, prompting the artists to continually refer to the success criteria that they created. Remind them that they will be responsible for communicating this success criteria to the younger artists that they will soon be teaching.

**Day Four - Preparing for Empty Bowls.** Artists will discuss what practices will lead to the success of an impending activity that they will be leading.

***Materials.*** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support collaboration and reflection to continue to develop success criteria for a piece of visual art and artistic practices.

- Clay
- Table covering, or clay work surface
- Pencils
- Paper
- The group created success criteria from the class prior

***Anticipatory Set.*** “You are all becoming clay experts. This is excellent, because soon the group that you have been working with will be responsible for teaching another group of younger artists everything that you know about Empty Bowls and creating bowls with clay. Does anyone have anything that they are excited about, or anything that they are nervous about this teaching day that you are preparing for?” Allow an artist to share an item of excitement or concerns. “Is there anyone else that is thinking and feeling the same thing that they shared?” If you are, then I would like you to say, “like me” after our speakers share their thoughts.”

Discuss with the artists if anyone was surprised that they were excited and/or nervous about the same things? How did it make you feel to know that others had the same thoughts?

**Instruction.** “Today we will spend some time discussing how you will share your knowledge and skills with your students. Hopefully, by the end of class, you will feel better prepared to teach.” Walk the class through the bowl making routines that they have been practicing but this time add in additional information that will give them some insights on how to teach the process to another person:

1. Introducing yourself and getting to know your student.
2. Focus on the importance of showing, not doing for their student.
3. Making each student feel valued, by using positive language.
4. Keep track of your students; you should always be aware of their location.
5. Model safe and responsible actions and language.
6. Keep your student on task and occupied.

Last time you created success criteria that will guide you and your students when you are making bowls together. Today you will work together as a group to again make another set of success criterion. But today, you will be thinking about things that your group will do to make your teaching day successful. Ask the groups to share their success criteria with you, the teacher, before collecting their clay materials.

**Guided Practice.** As the groups complete their success criteria, they will bring their document to you. Discuss the items that the artists included, guiding them to notice if there are any pertinent ideas that are missing. When it is clear that a group has developed a comprehensive

list of success criteria, welcome them to gather their materials and resume practicing their bowl making.

***Independent Practice.*** While the artists are once again working in groups, to practice creating a bowl for Empty Bowls, the teacher may circulate the room, prompting the artists to continually refer to both sets of success criteria that they created. Remind them that they will be responsible for communicating this success criteria to the younger artists that they will soon be teaching. During their teaching day, both sets of success criteria will be at their table, as a visual reminder for them, as the teacher.

### ***Lesson Five: Collaboration Day***

**Objective.** By the end of this lesson, the learner will have assessed their understanding by working in a group to share their learning with other students. The learner will also have referred to success criteria that they prepared with group members to guide their teaching experience.

**Audience.** This lesson is written for elementary aged students in a visual art class.

**Standards.** The following standards support the creation of a safe and collaborative learning environment, where students will participate in the making of art that is informative and reflects community values and traditions.

VA:Cr1.2.4a Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.

VA:Cr2.2.4a When making works of art, utilize and care for materials, tools, and equipment in a manner that prevents danger to oneself and others.

VA:Cn10.1.4a Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions.

SL.4.1b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles

P4.2.2 Participate in projects to help or inform others.

**Day One - Collaboration Day.** Artists will utilize all of the experience gained from the previous lessons to teach others.

**Materials.** The following are suggested supplies that are useful for the completion of the day's lesson. The materials will allow students to encounter visual representations of their learning and support collaboration and reflection to follow student developed success criteria for a piece of visual art and artistic practices.

Clay  
Table covering, or clay work surface  
The group created success criteria from the classes prior  
Images that summarize working with clay and Empty Bowls

***Anticipatory Set.*** Welcome the student teachers into the classroom. The group created success criteria should be waiting for them on their designated workspaces. As you, the teacher, orientate the class of younger students, the student teachers should take this time to review their success criteria.

***Instruction.*** Gather with the class of younger students, while the student teachers are stationed at their tables. “Today you don’t have one art teacher to learn from, today you have lots of art teachers! These artists have been working hard to prepare what they have been learning with you.” Share with the younger class some images that are glimpses into what the student teachers will be sharing with them today, so that interest is piqued, but you have not shared full details.

***Guided Practice.*** Before releasing the younger class of students, once again remind the student teachers that each group has a game plan at their table. Their success criteria is there to guide them as teachers, and has important information that they should be sharing with their students.

***Independent Practice.*** Release the younger class in groups to join the groups of student teachers. The teacher may circulate the room, reminding the artists of their success criteria. The teacher may also help foster relationships between the younger student and their student teacher if they sense some reluctance.

## **Sustaining Empty Bowls**

Lisa Blackburn and John Hartom, the creators of Empty Bowls, have inspired countless educators and artists to encounter social justice and community-based art education. One of the most inspiring parts of Blackburn and Hartom's work is how they have expounded upon their own model. The Empty Bowls project began as a way to address food instability by bringing together members of communities who do not commonly collaborate (Anderson, Coffey, & Dixon-Fowler, 2014). Besides the raising of funds to end local food instability, this has been the most powerful aspect of Empty Bowls in my community. As art educators, Blackburn and Hartom also knew the impact that service-learning would have on their students. In one of Lisa Blackburn's school buildings, the staff added another powerful service-learning opportunity into their Empty Bowls. The school created an outdoor garden, and prior to the event, students harvested the produce that they had grown. The day of, students and staff worked together to prepare soup and bread from the items that were collected on their campus. Not only are members of this learning community engaged in the Empty Bowls model to raise money and awareness for food instability, they are also engaging in environmental activism by supporting a garden (Anderson, Coffey, & Dixon-Fowler, 2014).

As the success of Empty Bowls has been sustained, Blackburn and Hartom continue to explore other avenues to further spread their message (Anderson, Coffey, & Dixon-Fowler, 2014). They have delivered bowls, created by young artists, to every member of Congress, with the hope inspiring their same passion to end hunger among the lawmakers. They have partnered with Habitat for Humanity in Pontiac, Michigan to create gardens on the properties for each family, who then also receive directions and materials to continue to tend and eventually harvest their own vegetables (Anderson, Coffey, & Dixon-Fowler, 2014).

The beauty of the Empty Bowl model is its ability to morph and transform to meet the needs of the hosting community. Not only do Blackburn and Hartom support this individuality, but their vision for their own events and related service projects has also evolved as they have grown as public servants and relocated to new communities. This is one of the reasons why Empty Bowls has retained its popularity and survived being seen as merely a trend.

## **Conclusion**

In order to create strong communities that are capable of questioning social assumptions and creating change, curricular content must go deeper than aesthetics. The educator must also continually work to establish trust between teacher, student and trust throughout the body of learners. “A quality art curriculum gives students the knowledge they need to notice and interpret a wide range of visual practices. Students in a democratic society need to be able to understand and participate in important cultural conversations” (Gude, 2007, p. 11). In order to prepare our students for the future that awaits them, curriculum should mirror the postmodern culture that they live within. There should be diverse experiences that teach them to be critical of the world around them and strive to discover ways in which to construct a better tomorrow. Social justice and community-based education practices, as seen in the Empty Bowls community service project curriculum, introduce learners and community participants to new experiences and perspectives that encourage collaboration for the greater good. Building and establishing communities within and near the classroom will provide these learners with an opportunity to develop their communication skills and develop a vision for how people can continue to come together to create change, an enduring understanding that is imperative for not only the success of the individual, but necessary for the success a democratic society (Nordlund, Speirs & Stewart, 2015).

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## Appendix A: Letter to Targeted Charity

Hello,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am the art educator that has the privilege to work within  
\_\_\_\_\_ Elementary, of \_\_\_\_\_ Schools.

Every April, the K-12 Visual Art Department holds an art show that celebrates the creative courage and learning that occurs in our schools. In addition to this art show, this year we are creating an opportunity for our Holly artists to use their creative talents to support the community. We will be hosting an Empty Bowls community service event on the night of our art show opening.

Empty Bowls is a visual art community service project model that promotes awareness of hunger and food equity in individual communities. Participants donate to enter the event, are given a small meal, and they take home a ceramic bowl that was handmade by an artist. These bowls are tangible reminders of the empty place settings on the tables throughout the community,

The art department is eager to support your tremendous efforts by donating the funds raised during our Empty Bowls to your organization.

Thank you for all the work you do to feed the children in our community.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

## **Appendix B: Grant Application Sample Narrative**

### **Provide a brief description of the community in which your school is located and the student demographics.**

Our students arrive at our school buildings every morning with enthusiasm. School is a place where our students feel safe, honored and loved. School provides a sense of stability that is often lacking in the other areas of our children's lives.

While students are held to rigorous learning standards, the school community recognizes that they must first help our students in unique and deeply meaningful ways. Each building has a closet of clothes, backpacks, and school supplies to provide our students with the materials that they need to learn. Our schools hold clothing swaps and work to make sure that our children will be appropriately dressed for the changing seasons. Our students have unique emotional learning needs and every building strives to keep relevant curriculum that will teach necessary inter/intrapersonal relationship skills.

In my individual classroom environment, to help meet the emotional needs of my students, I open my classroom up for open studio during my lunch/planning time. Students have the choice to spend their recess in the art room to either work on class assignments or develop art skills of their choosing. The open studio has allowed me to develop meaningful relationships with my students in ways that the regularly scheduled class time would never allow.

I am proud to be a member of a learning community that also understands the importance of meeting children's nutritional needs before asking them to meet educational goals. All students begin their day with a school funded breakfast. For a giant portion of our population this breakfast and their free/reduced lunch is not enough; as they leave school in the afternoon having already consumed their only two meals for the day. Nearly 50% of our 1,359 elementary students are at risk of food insecurity.

Recognizing that children cannot learn if they are hungry, area residents initiated bringing Blessings in a Backpack to our schools. This program sends our free/reduced qualifying students home with a backpack full of food on Fridays, to ensure that they will be fed the necessary six meals that a growing child needs over the weekend. Feeding all of the qualifying students at a single school for a year's worth of weekends costs \$22,000. This year, the local Blessings in a Backpack has raised enough to feed the children at three of our elementary buildings, after slowly raising enough to add one building a year at a time. We are still lacking the funds to extend this program to all buildings, with one remaining.

### **Brief description of equipment and supplies**

The requested supplies include clay and glaze. These materials will be shared between two elementary buildings and their combined 700 students. Approximately 70 adults, who include teachers, district administration, and school board members will also be contributing their creativity to this service-learning opportunity.

**Please describe the need for equipment/supplies:**

These supplies will allow 700 elementary artists and approximately 70 district staff members and local leaders to contribute to solving our community food crisis and bring Blessings in a Backpack to our last remaining elementary school.

We will create ceramic bowls that will be sold at a district-wide Empty Bowls fundraising event in conjunction with our K-12 district art show. The current district budget could not support the startup costs to begin a service-learning project of this magnitude.

Upon holding this event in April, I hope to raise funds to both contribute to the expansion of Blessings in a Backpack to all elementary buildings and reserve some funds to allow the art department to hold a family bowl making event the following school year. I envision this event growing every year to creatively involve more and more of our community. All the while, adding to the enduring understanding that art is a vehicle that can bring people together and inspire growth.

**How will supplies purchased with these funds meet educational goals and help your students achieve specific learning outcomes?**

Students will work with their multi-age learning buddies to construct ceramic bowls. Students will have the opportunity to creatively collaborate for the greater good and see art as a tool for social justice. The focus of our ceramic construction will be on community, not just one individual. Students will be able to use their creative abilities to ensure that they and their peers will be fed and capable to be the best learner, friend, citizen and leader that they can be. Students will also operate as teachers to community adults. This will allow the student to commit their learning in a meaningful way and take on a truly unique learning leadership role.

This large-scale service-learning project will provide opportunities for cross-curricular instruction that will reinforce school improvement goals. Students will use their nonfiction writing strategies to work collaboratively to write press releases informing local media of our endeavors. Students will also draft scripts that will advertise the event and classroom progress.

Students will study nutrition to learn what is necessary for their physical and cognitive development to further understand the need for food equity in their community.

**How will the project enhance education in your classroom/school and impact students?**

This project will impact our student artists by allowing them to be directly involved in creative service learning. It will integrate meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen our community in and outside of the classroom.

When collaborative art projects contain a community service dimension, participants gain a deeper understanding and satisfaction with their civic engagement. Collaborative art, when

presented and available to the public, is an enduring gesture and adds a layer of permanency to the project. Also, an individual's contribution takes on a different dimension when it joins forces with a group. The personal connection that one has with their art is deepened when it is shared with the community.



## Appendix C: Guardian Permission to Address School Board

Dear (Student Name),

Thank you for your interest in educating administrators and School Board members about Empty Bowls during the School Board meeting on Monday, March 9th from 6:00-6:30 pm.

In order to prepare for the presentation to the School Board, I would like to meet after school on Thursday, March 5th, from 3:45-4:30 pm.

If you are able to attend these two separate gatherings, please have a parent/guardian complete the permission slip below and return to \_\_\_\_\_ by Thursday, February 27th.

Thank you,

---

### Permission Slip

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that my child is interested in educating the community about the Empty Bowls community service project. I understand that their presence is needed during two separate meeting times:

Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, from 3:45-4:30 pm, for a rehearsal in the art room.

and

Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, from 6:00-6:30 pm, to present to the School Board at \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian email address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian phone number

## **Appendix D: Invitation to the School Board**

Dear Board of Education Member,

The Visual Art Department is pleased to formally invite you to the Annual District Art Show. On Monday, April 13th from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm at the \_\_\_\_\_, we will be having the opening reception for our K-12 District Art Show. We are always proud to come together as a unified visual art department to provide an opportunity that allows our students to showcase their creative talents and highlights the depth of learning that occurs in our classrooms.

For the fifth year, the Art Department has expanded our traditional art show model by including an Empty Bowls service event. This event combines the efforts and donations from students, staff, and families, as well as local businesses in our community. We are thrilled to be able to utilize the arts as a way to bring our community together to inspire empathy and action.

Empty Bowls is an art-based community service event, where artists come together to create ceramic bowls. On the night of the art show opening, the bowls that our students and staff members have made will be on display. After contributing a \$5.00 minimum donation, guests will choose a one-of-a-kind bowl that will be filled with treats donated by local business and community members. All of the proceeds acquired will be donated to the area Chapter of Blessings in a Backpack. We are excited that once again the visual art department is uniting in this way to benefit the children of our district by contributing to Blessings in a Backpack. Empty Bowls has provided our learners with a new creative experience that has introduced them to the power that art can have to inspire change.

Thanks to a grant awarded by Michigan Youth Arts, the elementary art department is able to include significantly more students in this year's Empty Bowls community service project. Students have set a goal to beat last year's fundraising total of \$2,567. The Michigan Youth Arts Grant has given the art department the ability to offer an opportunity for families to paint their own bowl during the event. These paintable bowls will be available with a \$10.00 minimum donation.

In addition to inviting you to attend the event on April 13<sup>th</sup>, the elementary art educators would like to welcome you into our classrooms to participate in bowl making in preparation. On the following page, you will find a list of dates and times when students will be coming together to make a change in their community. We are excited to have you witness their enthusiasm.

We look forward to celebrating the creativity of the community with you.

Sincerely,

## Appendix E: Invitation to Participate in Classroom Learning

You are invited to join us in the classroom as we prepare for Empty Bowls!

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	ACTIVITY
Monday, March 18 <sup>th</sup>	Art Room	7:50-8:30 1:50-2:35 4:00-4:45	glazing with staff 4 <sup>th</sup> grade bowl making glazing with staff
Wednesday, March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Art Room	7:40-8:20 9:35-10:20 10:25-11:10 3:45-4:30	glazing with staff 4 <sup>th</sup> grade bowl making 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade bowl making glazing with staff
Thursday, March 21 <sup>st</sup>	Art Room	9:35-10:20 10:25-11:10	4 <sup>th</sup> grade bowl making 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade bowl making
Thursday, March 28 <sup>th</sup>	Art Room	9:35-10:20 10:25-11:10 2:45-3:30	4 <sup>th</sup> grade teaching 1 <sup>st</sup> graders 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade teaching kindergarteners 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade teaching 5 <sup>th</sup> graders
Friday, March 29 <sup>th</sup>	Art Room	9:35-10:20 10:25-11:10	4 <sup>th</sup> grade teaching 1 <sup>st</sup> graders 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade teaching kindergarteners

## **Appendix F: Introducing Empty Bowls to Staff**

Hello Staff Members,

I am excited to share some upcoming art events with you and invite you to engage in some artmaking of your own.

On Monday, April 13th, from 5:30 to 7 pm, we are holding the annual opening for the K-12 Art Show at \_\_\_\_\_. We would love to have you there to celebrate our young artists.

In addition to the art show, the Art Dept is hosting an Empty Bowls Community Service Event. Empty Bowls is a visual art community service project model that promotes awareness of hunger and food equity in individual communities. Participants donate to enter the event, are given a small meal, and they take home a ceramic bowl that was handmade by an artist. These bowls are tangible reminders of the empty place settings on the tables throughout the community.

For a minimum donation of \$5.00, you can take home a clay bowl that has been handmade by a student. Proceeds from this event will be donated to Blessings in a Backpack, an organization that provides our community children with much needed meals over the weekends when they are away from school.

I would like to invite you to join me in the art room on Monday, March 30th, from 7:40 to 8:20 a.m. and/or 3:40 to 4:20 p.m. to create a clay bowl that will be sold on the night of our Empty Bowls celebration. No ceramic experience is necessary.

Thank you,

## **Appendix G: Volunteer Job Descriptions**

### **Ticket Sale Volunteer Responsibilities**

Please ask visitors if they will be painting a bowl this evening or selecting a bowl that is already completed.

Selecting a Completed Bowl:

\$5 minimum donation

Please give visitor a colored ticket

Glazing a Bowl:

\$10 minimum donation

Please give visitors a white ticket.

### **Bowl Sale Volunteer Responsibilities**

Visitors will approach the table and exchange a colored ticket for a bowl.

Please place the tickets you receive in the metal paint bucket. The art department will count these later to track how many bowls were sold.

As bowls are taken from the table, please fill the space with the extra bowls that are under the table...until that supply is gone.

Please guide visitors with a white ticket to the area to the right of the stage.

### **Cereal Server Volunteer Responsibilities**

Gallons of milk are in the refrigerator in the cafeteria kitchen. All cereal is on/behind the table.

Fill a few paper bowls with cereal, ready for visitors to take. Keep the box behind them, so they can see what varieties are available.

The same arrangement can be done for juice.

If there are enough volunteers, please pour the milk for the visitors.

If time, please break down the cereal boxes and save for the art department.

Please guide any visitors with a white ticket to the area to the right of the stage.

### **Bowl Table/Ticket Taker Volunteer Responsibilities**

Visitors will approach the table and can exchange a white ticket for a bowl.

Please place the tickets you receive in the metal paint bucket. The art department will count these later to track how many bowls were sold.

As bowls are taken from the table, please fill the space with the extra bowls that are under the table.

After the visitor has selected their bowl(s), point them in the direction of the glaze/brush table.

### **Glaze/Brush Table Volunteer Responsibilities**

Glazes are in the small plastic containers. Lids should be on securely, so that the glazes do not dry out.

There is a placard next to each color. This placard has the name of the glaze and shows what the glaze will look like once the bowl is fired. Some colors will change quite a bit after the firing.

Each visitor with a white bowl may select 3 containers of glaze.

Each visitor can take the brushes that they feel are necessary to complete their vision. If at any point you feel it is needed, you may impose a brush limit.

Please kindly tell the visitors to wash and dry their brushes in between colors and that colors cannot be mixed together to make new ones like usual paints.

Also, ask the visitor to not paint the bottom of their bowl.

As bowls are completed, another volunteer will wash the brushes and return them to your table.

### **Brush Washer/Water Filler Volunteer Responsibilities**

As visitors complete their bowl glazing, please direct them to the turn in table, at the back of the painting area.

When an artist has finished, please:

1. Wash brushes and return to the brush table.

2. Dump the dirty water in the dirty water buckets and refill with clean water. If buckets are not available, please dump and fill water bowls in the nearby bathrooms.
3. Throw away any used paper towels.

### **Turn in Table Volunteer Responsibilities**

As visitors complete their bowl glazing, they will be directed to your table. Please ask which elementary school their child attends, or which elementary school they would like their bowl sent to for pick up.

Once you know their elementary school, please direct the visitor to the corresponding clipboard. Here, next to a number, they will write their student's name, teacher, and the adult's email and phone number.

The number next to this information is the bowl ID number. Please use the very special underglaze pencil to write that number on the bottom of their bowl.

The very special pencil will remain on the bottom of the bowl, during the kiln firing. You cannot write the bowl number with just any pencil.

Once the number has been written on the bottom, you can place it on the appropriate school cart behind the table.

Give the visitor their school's pick-up information.

(Bowls will be taken back to school for the art teacher to apply a coat of clear glaze and fire the bowl for a second time. This will make the bowl food safe.)

## **Appendix H: Student Art Show Invitation**

Dear (Student Name),

We are pleased to inform you and your family that your (name of project) has been selected for the 20<sup>th</sup> annual District Wide Art Exhibit!

There will be an artists' reception to honor you on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, from 5:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. at \_\_\_\_\_.

Also, occurring on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., the Art Department will be hosting an Empty Bowls Community Service Event on the same campus as the art show. To enter, we ask that you contribute a \$5.00 minimum donation. Here, each contributor will receive a bowl that has been handmade by a student artist and entrance to a cereal buffet. For a \$10.00 minimum donation, families may also choose to paint a bowl, which they may pick up at a later to be determined date. Proceeds from this event will be donated to the local Blessings in a Backpack. This organization provides our community's children with meals over the weekends, when they are away from school.

We congratulate you on your creative achievements and invite you to share this invitation with your family and friends.

Sincerely,



# DISTRICT ART SHOW & EMPTY BOWLS



**\$10 donation to paint and take your own bowl.**

**\$5 donation to purchase a bowl made by an artist.**

**All donors are welcome to a cereal buffet.**

---

**MONDAY, APRIL 13  
5:30-7:00 PM  
AT THE COMMUNITY  
CENTER**

---

**Proceeds donated to Blessings in a Backpack.**



## Appendix J: Bowl Check Out

Bowl #	Student Name	Student's Teacher	Adult's Email Address	Adult's Phone Number

## **Appendix K: Bowl Pick Up Information**

### **Bowl Pick Up Information**

After the art show, volunteers will apply a layer of clear glaze to your bowl and fire it for a second time in the kiln.

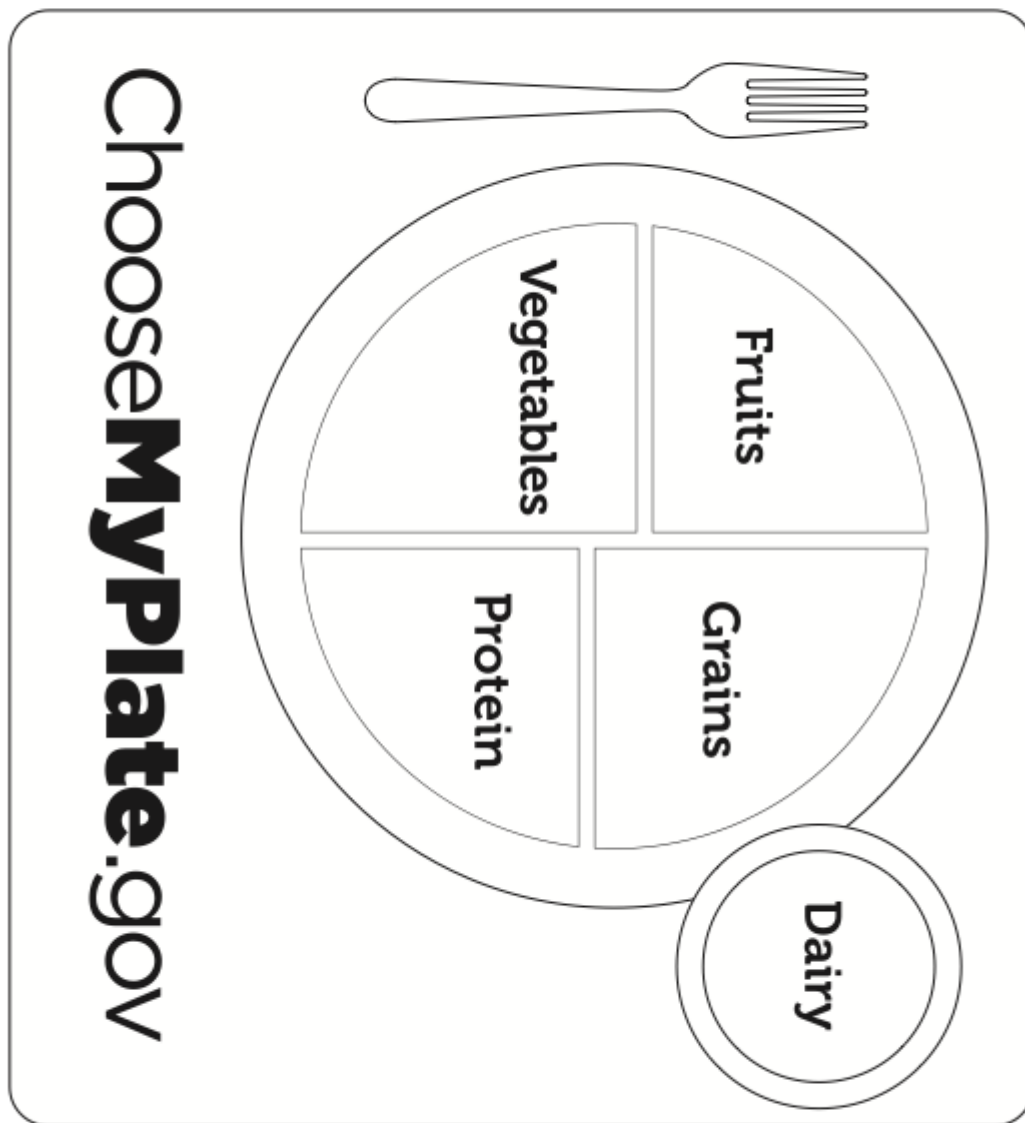
This will make your bowl food safe.

However, please hand wash the bowl and do not microwave.

Glazed bowls can be picked up  
on Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Bowls not picked up during this time, will be sent home with your child the following week.

## Appendix L: MyPlate Document



(From *Print Materials ChooseMyPlate*, United States Department of Agriculture, 2015)

## **Appendix M: Video Planning Document**

Group Members:

Event:

Job Assignments:

Camera operator)

Actors)

Speakers)

Materials needed:

Script:

Teacher approval: \_\_\_\_\_

This page must be completed before filming.