

Structuring Multicultural Art Education to Encourage Positive Cultural Identity

Recommendations for Secondary Art Teachers

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ABSTRACT

More educators are recognizing the importance of multicultural art education, but due to a gap in pedagogy, students often aren't provided the guidance and instruction necessary to take away lifelong skills in cultural appreciation, interpersonal communication, critical thinking and thoughtful expression. Providing students with these skills should be at the forefront of initiatives in secondary art education. While quality multicultural art education can result in interpersonal conflict between students in response to issues surrounding cultural identity, the environment of an arts classroom is the perfect space to confront and deconstruct such issues as they arise through the incorporation of conflict resolution strategies (CRS). These strategies, in tandem with quality multicultural art instruction, cultivate a strong classroom community and provide students lifelong skills.

KEY TERMS

Multicultural Art Education

Conflict Resolution Strategies

Cultural Identity

“Powerful learning experiences put you off balance, challenge you, make you uncomfortable”

(Bowman & Hamer, 2011, p 38).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
KEY TERMS	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
AN INTRODUCTION	
PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	7
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	10
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	11
RESEARCH QUESTION.....	13
DEFINITIONS.....	14
DELIMITATIONS & LIMITATIONS.....	16
STATEMENT OF BIAS.....	16
BENEFITS OF THE STUDY.....	17
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION	18
MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION.....	25
CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES (CRS) AND CULTURAL IDENTITY.....	30
A CURRENT LOOK AT MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION.....	34
PRAXIS	
INTRODUCTION TO UNIT PLANS.....	38
INTRODUCTION TO UNIT PLAN 1: ENGAGING LIFE & DEATH:.....	40
INTRODUCTION TO UNIT PLAN 2: STORIES & SUSTAINABILITY:.....	44
INTRODUCTION TO UNIT PLAN 3: BEHIND THE MASK:.....	52

GUIDE TO (CRS) FRAMEWORK FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION.....	57
BEST PRACTICES IN MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION.....	65

CONCLUSIONS.....	67
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UNIT PLANS

Unit Plan 1: Celebrating Life & Death	69
Unit Plan 2: Stories & Sustainability	75
Unit Plan 3: Behind the Mask	81

REFERENCES CITED.....	88
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AN INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In middle and high school art classrooms, students encounter peers from many cultural backgrounds and with a variety of abilities, interests, fears and motivations. What drives each student academically will be dependent, to a certain extent, on his or her cultural background; that is, the set of values that construct worldviews and belonging to one or more nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, place or other social group (Bill Flood, 2014). In addition, each student has at least four basic needs; "belonging, inner power, freedom and fun" (Russell Brunson, 2002, 13). Visual arts education is inherently built to satisfy each of those needs (Brunson, 2002, 13; Baumeister and Leary, 1995, 497).

Though multicultural art education has existed as a field in the United States for over half a century (Christine Sleeter, 1991, p 9), the terminology describing it has arguably changed more rapidly than the curricula designed to actually meet the needs of students in public school classrooms. The majority of teachers are no longer following what Christine Sleeter & Carl Grant (1987) outline as the "Teaching the Culturally Different" theory of multicultural art education, in which the objective is to assimilate students of color into the existing social structure (pp 424-425). Instead, teachers tend to aim for a multicultural education that "fosters an appreciation of America's diverse population, and teaches them skills they may use to deal vigorously with these issues" (Sleeter & Grant, 1989, 212). Still, in many cases, neither the lessons that are actually taught nor the structure of curricula meet the basic needs of students or provide them with additional skills. While students are perhaps able to learn about other cultures and arts, they are rarely given opportunities to make those arts relevant to their own lives or to

share with their peers their own cultural narratives. In addition, popular multicultural art education lessons, while well meaning in intent, too often do not include ample historical background, mandate the use of appropriate materials, or ask students to invest their own histories and research into projects. An example of oversimplified multicultural art education is the making of sugar skulls to teach students about the Dia de Los Muertos celebration, in that students make but are not given the tools to appreciate the cultural context. This paper provides recommendations to middle and high school teachers open to redefining the role and structure of multicultural art education in their classrooms.

Planning for and teaching quality multicultural art education isn't without difficulties. While educators often view cultural differences between young people as opportunities for interpersonal discovery, differences sometimes first emerge as conflicts. To ask students to share their cultural narratives, encounter those of others, and reexamine the way they think critically – all while learning new art techniques – is to ask students to put themselves in a place of vulnerability. In this vulnerability, potentially even fear of judgment, there is a risk for interpersonal conflict. Conflict, especially interpersonal conflict in response to issues of cultural identity can be difficult for classroom teachers to manage. Further, students often haven't been taught the skills to approach difficult conversations, especially their cultural background or beliefs. The lack of “necessary accommodation” to exert a more accurate and positive cultural identity leave students at risk for a conflict-ridden and misunderstood middle and high school experience (Genevieve Patthey-Chavez, 1993, 33).

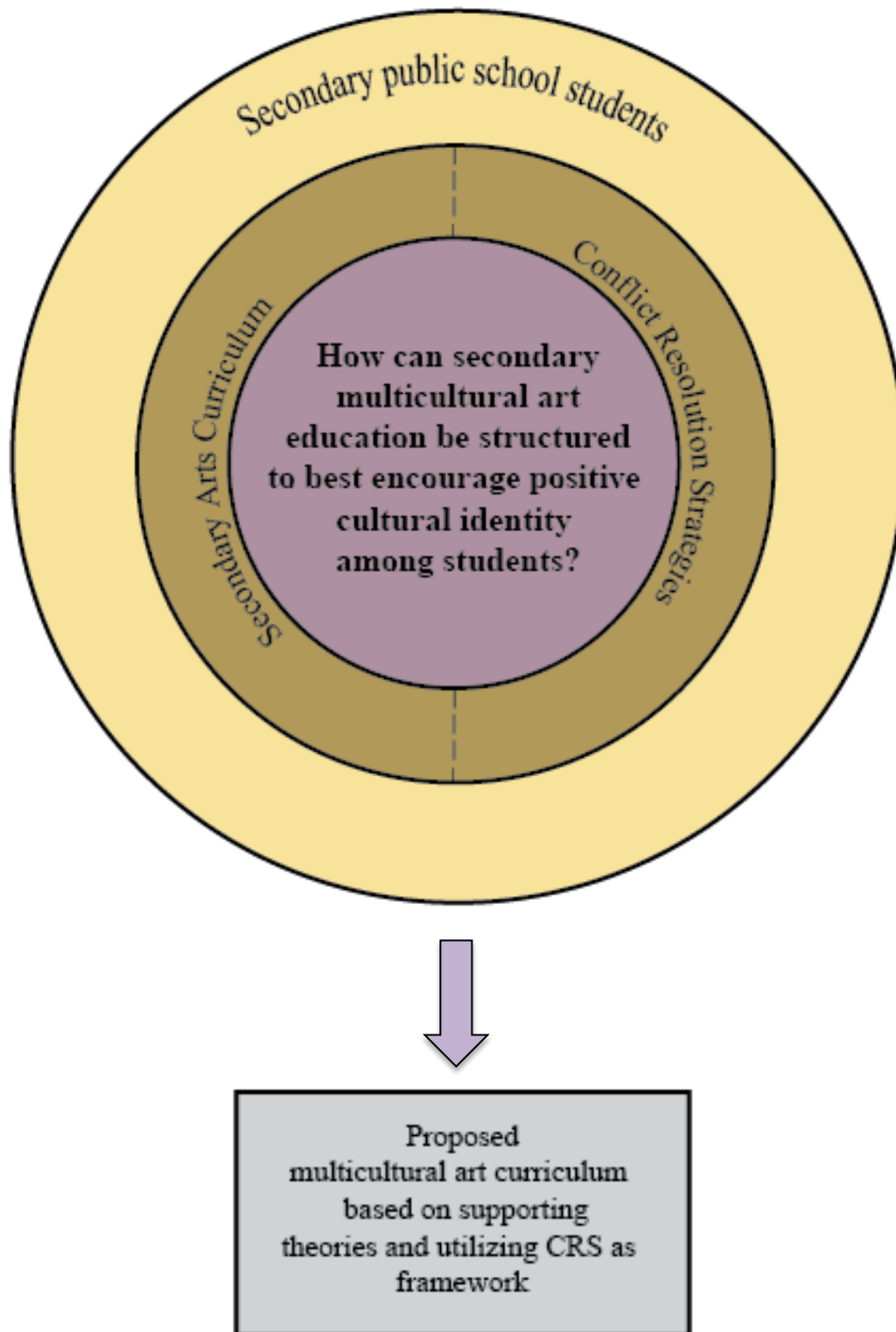
Most of the literature surrounding the integration of Conflict Resolution Strategies (CRS) in art education centers around either elementary school aged youth or adults, with little research focused on intervening age groups. Elementary schools integrate conflict resolution strategies by

utilizing theatre art as anti-bullying and diversity awareness campaigns and adults have long found it useful in work environments to learn communication strategies. Adolescents have fallen through the gap when it comes to any conflict resolution training at such a critical developmental stage as they continue to discover their cultural identities, move forward into first jobs, higher education and begin to take on the responsibility of becoming young adults.

Brunson (2002) states, “youth arts programs are uniquely positioned to introduce conflict resolution skills because they already encourage positive communication and creative thinking skills” (p 4). Art critiques, collaborative art projects, performances and the environment of an arts classroom provides space for students to take risks and uncover new possibilities for understanding one another through failures and ongoing transformation (John Days, 2012, 89). CRS integration helps teenagers deal with sensitive information in ways appropriate for their development stages, needs, interests and is a tool they can carry with them as they enter the work force or pursue higher education.

Through extensive research to find best practices in secondary multicultural art education, this paper will make clear recommendations about how Conflict Resolution Strategies (CRS) as outlined by Brunson (2002) can be integrated into multicultural art lessons to arm students of all cultural backgrounds with the skills they deserve to best express their cultural identities and appreciate and respect the identities of their peers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



The diagram on the previous page represents the overall conceptual framework of this paper. The outer ring represents secondary public school students with diverse cultural backgrounds, distinct sets of needs, interests and motivations. The middle ring is two fold; on the left side is the multicultural art curricula that has been researched, and on the right side is CRS integrated as a framework for the three proposed lesson plans based on supporting theories. In the center is the guiding research question of this paper; how can secondary multicultural art curriculum be structured to best encourage positive cultural identity among students?

While CRS could be explored in detail in regards to secondary art curriculum, it is not the focus of this paper. In this paper, it is proposed as a framework for lesson plan structure, and a tool to facilitate meaningful dialogue, critical thinking, and self-reflection as it supports student development of positive cultural identity and a heightened awareness of the cultural identities of their peers. This paper assumes the existence of interpersonal cultural conflicts between secondary students, and aims to provide recommendations for teachers based on supporting theories in creating meaningful learning opportunities amongst interpersonal vulnerability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to find out how multicultural art curricula can be structured to create classroom environments that encourage the expression of positive cultural identity among students and facilitate classroom cultural awareness.

I have chosen to complete a Capstone Research paper because of the academic opportunities at the University of Oregon. It has culminated as a literature review, with guidance from Dr. Doug Blandy, Dr. Lori Hager and Dr. John Fenn.

RESEARCH APPROACH

As this is an extensive literature review, I was careful to select sources that are as recent as possible and relevant to the study, including literature representing varied cultural viewpoints. I relied on printed and catalogued documents in addition to journal articles and book chapters for triangulation of terminology and concepts. I was careful to not rely on single sources for definitions or understanding of broad thematic areas. I compared dated sources with newer sources and noted differences. I continued my literature review of CRS as it exists within an arts context, though best practices in multicultural art education are the priority of this study.

Through Capstone classes, I explored the interrelationships between a democratic and multicultural education, CRS and secondary art education pedagogy. I noted gaps and inconsistencies, and commented on the perceived effectiveness of existing strategies.

This research is a critical inquiry and I took an interpretivist approach. In this study, I noted that classrooms are communities of individuals who understand their experiences through multiple lenses defined by their cultural backgrounds, basic needs and personal interests. As an interpretivist, I also looked through my own cultural lens to interpret which curriculum strategies I felt were truly best practices.

I complemented this literature review by enrolling in the following two courses:

YOUTH ARTS CURRICULUM METHODS: [LISA ABIA-SMITH]

The purpose of enrolling in this course was to research visual art education curriculum, especially that with a focus on exposing students to cultural artifacts and traditions that may be new to them. Through limited child development research in tandem with research on “best

practices” from articles by art educators, I noted the benefits and drawbacks of multicultural art curriculum, as it exists. Ultimately, my three proposed unit plans resulted from research completed through this class.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: [DR. DOUG BLANDY]

I studied with Dr. Doug Blandy to research the interrelationships between a democratic and a multicultural education. I researched the historical narrative of multicultural education with a theoretical look at issues surrounding student cultural identity. In addition, I noted where the terms “conflict resolution” and “conflict resolution strategies (CRS)” appeared in literature, if at all, and where CRS exists through other terminology.

RESEARCH QUESTION

My research focused on the following question, as well as the following sub-questions.

How can secondary multicultural art education curriculum be structured to best encourage positive cultural identity among students?

- What are best practices in secondary multicultural art education?
- How can conflict resolution strategies (CRS) be integrated into lesson plans as a framework for cultivating meaningful dialogue, encouraging critical thinking and self-reflection?
- What are some of the main problems with the way multicultural art lessons are currently taught?

DEFINITIONS:**MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION**

This is a term that has changed in meaning widely since civil rights movements in the 1950s and 60s and continues to change in meaning as schools redefine the role of student cultural identity in curriculum development. The term “multiculturalism” is perhaps problematic in itself because in order for a lesson or a person to be “multicultural,” then it or the person must be something other than what is expected. A room full of white or Caucasian-appearing students is not typically considered a multicultural or diverse classroom; if the same classroom included a handful of students appearing to come from other racial or ethnic backgrounds, it would be considered multicultural. As perceptions and assumptions alone are grossly inadequate in judging the multiculturalism of a classroom, or of any one student for that matter, the terminology describing multicultural art education is problematic.

This paper utilizes the following definition, which, while dated, still meets the goals of multicultural education as proposed in this paper:

Multicultural art education “celebrates racial and cultural diversity, understands other cultures on their own terms, and embodies the belief that with words and ideas, marginalized groups can be empowered...” (Philip Herbert, 1977, p 154).

It is worth noting that in this paper, the term multiculturalism will not be used interchangeably with diversity. As a concept in education pedagogy, multiculturalism represents the past and present contexts associated with cultures, especially those that have been historically misrepresented. Diversity generally refers to the ethnic or racial makeup of a group of people, and not necessarily the impact of race or ethnicity on their cultural identities.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES:

Conflict Resolution Strategies (CRS) are tools integrated into curriculum to help young people identify internal and external conflict, verbalize it to others, and begin to work through it towards a more positive outcome. CRS are integrated on day one and followed through post-evaluation. CRS are a framework for healthy, respectful, and effective communication amongst students. “When conflict resolution skills are used effectively, people in conflict express their emotions and perceptions, and determine what is at the heart of the conflict in an attempt to resolve it, each a potentially positive and fulfilling experience” (Brunson, 2002, 13). While CRS may be understood as a classroom management tool, they are not to be mistaken for a disciplinary method. Ideally, CRS are taught, then utilized by students to work through interpersonal conflicts they are experiencing in and out of the classroom. These are essentially life skills that students can utilize in a variety of situations they will encounter, in school, and post-graduation.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

For the purposes of this paper, a student’s cultural identity is, as stated before, the “feeling of belonging to one or more nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, place, or other social group that manifests itself in some distinct way and is constantly transforming” (Bill Flood, 2014).

I believe culture is something that bonds people together, moves them forward and teaches them how to preserve what they left behind. Cultural identity, then, is the fabric that gives people meaning, enabling them to define their own histories, whether individually or collectively, and build a future. It is neither limited to ethnicity, social class or environment, but rather how each defines the lens through which they operate.

DELIMITATIONS:

The scope of this study is narrowed to the curriculum designed for secondary students in formal education settings: that is, private and public school classrooms. While it would be valuable to study informal learning environments such as community centers, museums, and out of school time workshops, they are not the focus of this study.

LIMITATIONS:

As this is a literature review of existing information, the findings of study will rely on the accuracy of the research of others. There will be much discussion regarding culture and artistic expression, and it is potentially limiting that I am relying on the insight of others to analyze concepts that are so unique to each individual.

In addition, the notion of conflicts in the classroom is limited to cultural conflicts. There are a range of other types of conflicts which exist in classrooms but are not be addressed. There are also a multitude of systemic causes for ethnic and racial misrepresentation and discrimination that are outside the scope of this research.

STATEMENT OF PERSONAL BIAS

“The last thing I want is to be the person that tells people what the diversity in the world is. I want it to speak for itself, and therefore, it has to be represented. I can share what I’ve heard about other people, and seen about other situations, but I can’t really be that” (Matthew Ouelett, 2005, p 552). As a beginning teacher, researcher, and lifelong student, this quote could be the introduction to my personal manifesto.

If asked about my cultural background, I would likely speak about growing up in a small town in Southern Oregon, my family's favorite foods to make on holidays, the way my roots in the Midwest have affected my value system, or the way I use art to best express my convictions. I would also likely reference my education being a large part of my culture as I have spent a large portion of my life as a student. Many components create what I consider to be the culture(s) I identify with, and yet, while my cultural identity is important, I recognize I have never been a member of one of the prescribed 'other' cultures – those which multicultural art education typically seeks to bring awareness to and break down borders around to form a more inclusive and cohesive student community.

In my career, I will teach about cultures and traditions I cannot fully understand but am sensitive to. Even though I will continue to research before teaching, because I am not of certain cultures and do not take part in certain traditions, my understanding will be limited. My intent is to better understand cultures around the world through artistic practice and to never pretend to be an authority on cultures or traditions not my own. As a teacher, I hope to perpetually remain a student to the cultural knowledge young people have to share.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

This study culminates in a set of proposed unit plans based on best practices in multicultural art education that are immediately utilizable in classrooms nationally and internationally. It may become a resource for arts educators who are concerned about the conflicts they see in their classrooms, are sensitive to the faults of many multicultural art lessons easily accessible to them and are interested in implementing new strategies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION

It is said that the United States is built on a foundation of democracy. Democracy, as it is often taught, is rooted in the participation and empowerment of all individuals, rather than a few privileged voices. A heightened awareness of the multicultural makeup of student populations has sparked discussions in recent years surrounding the type of democracy present in schools. According to Cassie Davis (2014), the ethnic makeup of students feeding into Eugene School District 4J has seen considerable changes in recent years. While 8.5% of the student population identifies with more than one race or ethnicity, the Hispanic student population has grown considerably to 14.3% overall and reaches 30-40% of the student population at certain schools. Students identifying as white are still in the majority at 70% overall, though as low as 48% of the student population at one school (Davis, 2014). While race and ethnicity are not necessarily linked to particular cultural backgrounds or experiences, there are ways in which developing student cultural identity is affected by the social, political and historical ramifications of race and ethnicity; for example, how one is perceived by others and perceives themselves. In classrooms where the uniqueness and participation of each student should not only be accepted, but rather cultivated and encouraged, the question emerges; in what ways are students granted equal representation and empowered to share their uniqueness with others?

According to Grant (2012), “schools are not democratic places. The flow of decision-making is generally top-down rather than rising up from below. Much of schools’ teaching does not prepare students to engage in the serious practice of democracy...” (pp 924-925). Grant is not alone in his comments on the structure of education; Paolo Freire wrote profusely on the

subject of top-down instruction. In “Education for Critical Consciousness,” Freire (1974) urges the dominant class to notice the way top-down education strips students of their power, and denies them their right to think critically (p 39). Freire also states that “before it becomes a political form, democracy is a form of life, characterized above all by a strong component of transitive consciousness” in which those who were disempowered are empowered and all people engage in critical thought and enlightened dialogue (p 25).

Freire places an emphasis on cultivating dialogue and was an advocate for cultural literacy as a primary component to a democratic education. Cultural literacy, according to Freire, means that there must be space made for individuals to express themselves verbally and creatively, even to blind eyes or deaf ears (p 76). The concept of cultural literacy is echoed by Jaime Romo and Claudia Chavez (2006) who note the particular difficulty students face when information is fed to them by teachers who, due to language barriers or racial and ethical misunderstandings, are either unable or unwilling to understand the cultural narratives of their students (p 143). As they are bravely continuing to develop their cultural identities, students deserve space to consider worldviews other than that of their teachers so they may think critically about the world around them.

If there is a way for education to be democratic, then what does it look like? Education theorists agree that classroom curriculum should be structured in a way that each student’s voice is accounted for, and teachers and administrators do their best to provide resources that feed what motivates their students (Grant, 2012, p 912; Dewey, 1934, pp 46-47). Grant calls attention to what refers to as the “traditional Jeffersonian, Mannian and Deweyan aims and goals of education such as personal autonomy, critical and analytical thinking, ethical judgment, learning how to function as a diverse society, learning to forge relationships across difference and to

respect one another's perspectives, experiences and worldviews" (p 911). For the purposes of this paper, the relationships 'forged' are interpersonal between students and students and teachers, as each type of relationship should be built on the intent to understand one another more fully. This, as Grant explains, "requires educators to work from a place of authentic critical caring; that high-quality learning experiences are prioritized: that authentic, cooperative communities are built in classrooms" (p 913). A democratic education, then, is one where teachers and administrators ensure that the students' best interests are the top priority and policies and procedures are based in equality and fair representation. Grant hopes that his grandchildren will "have an education that is responsive to their identity and cultural historical background" and feels this hope should be a goal of a democratic education (p 911). In a democratic classroom, bundled in the best interests of students is more than training to be skilled workers; there is also emphasis placed on culture and identity.

Prioritizing a democratic education is especially important to consider for those students who don't feel they fit the stereotypical American student description. Though sentiments posed by Romo & Chavez (2006) are generally based on their understanding of the experiences of Hispanic students in American schools that border Mexico, the sentiments are applicable to the types of experiences and internal conflicts that exist for many students struggling to navigate more than one cultural, racial, or ethnic identity. Among these difficulties are "language acquisition, socioeconomic status and cultural competency" which can become even more difficult for students "when increasingly diverse K-12 student bodies meet with predominately mono-cultural teachers, curriculum and pedagogy" (Romo & Chavez, 2006, p 143). Thus, a type of education that welcomes debate, conversation about cultural identity, and expects tolerance is one that can, as stated by Romo & Chavez "create borderlands in which the diverse cultural

resources allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power” (143). It is likely that Freire would have advocated for this fashioning of power amongst students, especially those who feel they are in the minority rather than the dominant majority. A classroom environment which actively assists students in constructing and expressing their personal narratives, increase their awareness of other cultures and do their part in promoting justice for all students is democratic education.

This notion of promoting the student narrative is common among education theorists. Patrice Meyer-Bisch (1995) states that the school must “first and foremost (be) the place where real dialogue takes place” (p 11). Pickles (1985) states that “the task of education is to engage students in a dialogue with the commonplaces of their world in order that they can (a): understand and hold on to the commonplaces which are significant; (b): transcend those commonplaces which are parochial and constraining and (c): change those commonplaces which they judge to be wrong” (p 233). For the purposes of this paper, “commonplaces” denote the secondary art classroom, where students may have a range of positive and negative experiences. Democratic education must engage students in dialogue about these experiences, and it must be structured in a way that helps students express the cultural narratives that at times remain hidden.

The core practices in education proposed by Grant (2012) are outlined as they relate to secondary art education with a multicultural objective rather than education as a whole field. These core practices stem from Grant’s desire for teachers to have a “robust social justice vision of education;” that is, students are challenged to move beyond surface-level learning and reflection and be encouraged to find out how their ideas and opinions fit in to the world outside of their classrooms (p 921). For this to be possible, students need to first cultivate skills to understand how their peers arrive at ideas. Martha Nussbaum (1997) echoes this sentiment, that

students should learn how they are “bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern, cultivating an ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story” (p 10). In this way, the five core practices as outlined by Grant prioritize compassion and heightened awareness just as much as social action. The practices are the following; “self assessment, critical questioning, practicing democracy, social action and criteria for adjudication” (p 910).

In the following short sections, I will outline these practices as they relate to multicultural and secondary art education. To see how each practice can be translated into best practices, see “Best Practices in Multicultural Art Education” in this document, pages 65-66.

Self-Assessment:

To Grant (2012), “Self-assessment” is “recognition of one’s beliefs and values and the traditions on which they sit” (p 921). Curriculum should be structured in a way that students critically evaluate their own values while becoming aware of the values of others. This core practice also emphasizes that “no beliefs are accepted as authoritative simply because they are handed down by tradition or become familiar through habit” (p 921). In this way, the teacher is not excluded. In fact, Grant feels that the way the teacher publically understands and accepts his or her own beliefs and values is crucial to students feeling empowered to understand and accept themselves (p 920). A teacher’s self-assessment through verbal or visual brainstorming is an important component of classroom leadership. In addition, the behavior a teacher models is likely to translate into student behavior. Janice Woodhouse & Clifford Knapp (2000) echo Grant; “To develop a robust vision of social justice, students must receive practice in analyzing their vision of society and the actions that are taking place around them, these actions should be

located and rooted in the local, the culture, history, literature, and art of students' communities" (p 921). Thus, to self-assess is to analyze more than one's identity. It is also important, especially in multicultural learning, to remember the inseparable ties between self and community contexts, including history, literature, and art. Students should be encouraged to bring stories of their experiences outside the classroom inside the classroom to teach their peers and to practice self-reflection and assessment (Dewey, 1934, pp. 46-48).

Critical Questioning:

Critical questioning is a fairly straightforward practice, but not one that is always easy to implement in the classroom. It can quickly become personal, emotion-driven and calls for specific student behavior expectations to assure mutual respect. In essence, it is a way of changing the structure of education from top-down, as critiqued by Freire (1974), Dewey (1934) and Grant (2012), to a more horizontal peer to peer structure, aiding students in questioning critically as they move from being oppressed to enlightened (Freire, p 15). When curriculum provides space for critical thinking, "questions encourage analytical thinking and the consideration of competing points of view" (Grant, p 922). Utilizing critical thinking asks students to "track the truth," that is, analyze what is known, question what is unknown, and through discussion, begin to delineate what must be true (p 922). A classroom that fosters critical questioning allows students to more easily visualize the truths held by their classmates and compare and contrast them with their own truths.

Practicing Democracy:

This practice reiterates ideas from Freire (1974) and Romo & Chavez (2006) in that individuals with power often teach in a way that does not transfer power to the less dominant or

otherwise catalyze their intellectual development. “Practicing democracy” calls on teachers to help their students understand what they can do “to influence an outcome that benefits those who are marginalized” and “develop a critical awareness of what [they] are reading, seeing and hearing” (Grant, 2012, p 925). That is, this practice is particularly concerned with those perceived to be less dominant. A lack of dominance may coincide with a lack of power, the feeling of being unheard or basic needs going unmet.

Encouraging Social Action:

This practice emphasizes that democratic education should cultivate more than an individual’s ability to think critically. Grant (2012) feels that education which “prepares individuals to go to the heart of complex problems and have the courage and the ability to state their convictions clearly, concisely and openly... is not enough” (p 926). Students must also be able to act on these convictions. A social action vision of education is one in which there is “individual or group behavior that involves other individuals or groups” (p 926). Unfortunately, few theorists have posed a specific framework to help students accomplish this, especially within formal education settings. In the following sections, this paper proposes solutions to helping middle and high school art students and teachers engage in this practice.

Adjudication:

Melanie Walker (2003) asserts that “we need a theory or principles of justice which enables us to adjudicate between our actions so that we can say with some confidence this action is more just than that” (p 169). The practice of adjudication brings to light the importance of assessing the practices that are utilized in classrooms. Adjudication is about specifically asking what is being measured, with what type of measuring stick, and why it is worthwhile.

Adjudication is evaluation, justification, and social practice in one term as outlined by Grant (2012).

Now that I've provided an introduction to democratic education, I turn to the ways in which multicultural art education theory responds to core practices in democratic education.

MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION

Democratic multicultural education is grounded both in morality and politics. Morally, such education should celebrate the cultural identities of each student in a classroom because the positive identity development of those students depends on it. Politically, multicultural education dictates the manner in which each student is fairly represented. Democratic multicultural education breeds critically thinking individuals who know ways to express themselves, and ask and respond to difficult questions. As stated by James Boyer & H. Prentice Baptiste, Jr. (1996), "there can be no sustaining of the freedoms now enjoyed in the United States without sustaining a curriculum that socializes learners to their role and responsibilities in the human intellectual enterprise" (p 9). Though the notion of a "human intellectual enterprise" is perhaps limiting to the vast benefits a multicultural lens brings to students through transformed curriculum structure, it is true that a classroom that prioritizes multiculturalism can be understood as a democratic classroom.

Multicultural education largely originated within a context of social activism and has drawn energy from the nation's struggles against ethnic, racial, gender, and ability oppression (Boyer & Baptiste, 1996, pp. 31-36). The term "multicultural education" was used during school decisions in the 1950s and 1960s movements regarding racial segregation and the 1970s and

1980s during discussions about human rights regarding gender, sexual orientation and disability (Boyer & Baptiste, pp 33-36). From the 1990s through the present day, the term “multicultural education” has taken a more intentional focus on racial and ethnic diversity among students, with immigration, equal representation for minority groups and cultural sensitivity at the forefront of research in multicultural education.

“The school’s educational role is to give an account of past and contemporary cultures, near or far, with their interactions so that all pupils can understand how their own culture is formed of a myriad of cross-fertilizations. This means giving pride of place in every subject to intercultural interfaces... In many schools there is wide cultural diversity, which must be managed with the twofold aim of respecting differences and protecting the right to similarities. We know that the school has a role to play in integration on condition that integration is not understood as mere assimilation but rather as mutual enrichment” (Patrice Meyer-Bisch, 1995, pp. 25-26).

The notion of respecting cultural differences while simultaneously recognizing those similarities that exist between all students is a crucial one in multicultural education, and an often daunting one for teachers who experience great diversity in cultural identities among students in their classrooms.

Christine Sleeter (1991) states that “in schools the source of curriculum usually has very little to do with the students. The most common way educators select curriculum is to turn to traditionally accepted knowledge that has been encoded and passed down” (p 50). Such a top-down teaching structure poses two problems. One, if the curriculum for a project is already complete at the time it is taught, then it is likely not meeting the individual needs of the students. Two, if the curriculum has been “passed down,” it is likely irrelevant to at least a portion of its audience – and ‘audience’, rather than ‘engaged critical thinkers’ is the more accurate term. Still, due to restrictions posed on teachers such as time and resources, Sleeter’s comment identifies a

common problem. As explained by Sleeter, the Cartesian model of teaching sees knowledge as information that is passed from teacher to student, as if a basket of eggs. When the eggs, or information, arrives to students intact, then “effective” teaching and learning has been achieved (p 51). In a sense, curriculum that is afraid to take risks, be relevant, and encourage each student to express their unique cultural identity is one that is already inhibiting to student achievement.

Grant (2012) suggests that the lack of student-centered curriculum perhaps emerges from the narrow conception some schools have of education, that is, to merely prepare students for future careers, meet standards and abide by policies. The real problem is, as Grant suggests, there is little conversation around “issues such as underrepresentation of people of color in science, technology and engineering” (p 910). The underrepresentation of people of color in STEM careers is indicative of larger systemic issues than sub-par multicultural education, but not irrelevant when considering the support that all students need, especially those of underrepresented ethnic or cultural groups. While many teachers work hard to encourage the positive cultural development of their students, the overarching curriculum structure is often slow to change as teachers feel overwhelmed by state and federal policies governing what must be taught in their classrooms in order for students to pass standardized tests.

Unfortunately, when students are unsure of how or where their cultural identities fit into their classrooms, or are not “psychologically accommodated” (Boyer & Baptiste, 1996, p 44), they are quick to check out. Sleeter (1991) states, “students who are disabled by their school experience do not experience congruence between school knowledge and the knowledge they bring to school with them” (p 51). In this case, “disabled” means personally forgotten or misrepresented and the knowledge students don’t contribute – narratives, insights and talents unique to each student – is also often forgotten and/or misrepresented. As Sleeter notes, “Just as

the school had tacitly dismissed the importance of student's own cultural knowledge and the process through which it was constructed, the students dismissed most school knowledge, seeing it as useless" (p 52). A student's cultural knowledge cannot be treated as supplementary to other insights but rather celebrated as a primary ingredient to multicultural education.

Multicultural education "recognizes the intellectual capacity of often marginalized students, provides curriculum content that is challenging and culturally responsive and maintains ongoing reflective assessment of what [teachers] teach, how they teach and why... a commitment to cultivating the intellect of every student and particularly those who have too often been denied the right to become flourishing intellectual students" (Grant, 2012, p 915). Grant repeatedly references the idea of cultivating a flourishing life as something that teachers should strive to bring to all students. Rather than assimilation or pluralism, the focus in multicultural education should be on the cultivation of a positive identity, built from each student's cultural knowledge. There is no cultural requirement as a starting point; all individuals have and/or are a component of culture, but students often need to be empowered to trust in what they know and believe. As Sleeter states, "education for empowerment demands taking seriously the strengths, experiences, strategies and goals members of the oppressed groups have. It also demands helping them to analyze and understand the social structure that oppresses them and to act in ways that will enable them to reach their own goals successfully" (Sleeter, 1991, p 6).

Perhaps just as important as teachers knowing how to structure curriculum that accommodates the needs of each student is providing curriculum that empowers their students to be invested in their own education. "Education for empowerment also means teaching students how to advocate effectively for themselves as individuals as well as collectively" (Sleeter, 1991, p 6). In this paper and resulting unit curriculum plans, a basic conflict resolution framework will

be integrated into multicultural art education so that students can gain skills in taking control of their own educations, lives, and personal experiences.

Multicultural education in the United States has weathered a range of iterations in meaning and terminology. Since Grant & Sleeter (1987) published the following 5 historical approaches to multicultural education, there have been no new major approaches. These approaches are not necessarily a historical progression of multicultural education; as discussed by Grant & Sleeter, many of these approaches are used in tandem or at different times in the same school year. “Teaching the Culturally Different” and “Human Relations” are no longer the most prominent approaches, but they may still be utilized in some schools. The five approaches are the following:

- **Teaching the Culturally Different:** Assimilate students of color into cultural mainstream and existing social structure by offering bridges within existing program
- **Human Relations:** Help students of different backgrounds get along better and appreciate each other
- **Single Group Studies:** Foster cultural pluralism by teaching courses about the experiences, contributions and concerns of different groups
- **Multicultural Education:** Promote cultural pluralism and social equality by reforming school program for all students to help it reflect diversity (school staffing, unbiased curricula, affirmation of non-English languages, appropriate instructional materials)
- **Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist:** Prepare students to challenge social structural inequality and promote cultural diversity (Grant & Sleeter, 1987, p 422).

There is little curriculum framework directly associated with any of the above approaches, and no recent frameworks to be found for specifically secondary multicultural art education. In any case, in order for teachers to accommodate the cultural backgrounds and empower the cultural knowledge of their students, it is essential that creating a framework, or at least a 21st century approach to multicultural education is a priority for teachers.

The following section will review ways in which Conflict Resolution Strategies (CRS) can create a framework for curriculum that helps empower the cultural identities of each student. Specific recommendations for integrating CRS into curriculum are provided in a later section and in direct reference to attached unit lesson plans.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES (CRS) AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

As suggested by Robert Clements & Frank Wachowiak (2010), art education should purpose itself in encouraging children to develop strategies to manipulate information, critically explore it, and ultimately, be “problem seekers or raisers” (p 169). However, as this paper explores the integration of CRS into multicultural art education, the problems that students are encouraged to “seek or raise” may land in more sensitive territory than would an art lesson positioned to only teach technical skill. For example, the first of the attached unit plans asks students to investigate and discuss celebrations of life and death in various cultures. Conflict may emerge from a multitude of situations. There may be students who have recently lost a loved one and are grieving or students who celebrate Dia de Los Muertos and are unsure of how other students will respond. The interpersonal conflict that may emerge, both internally and externally, will be deeper and require more skills to navigate than, for example, an art lesson about drawing a still life. Such a lesson requires patience and perseverance more than CRS skills.

Unfortunately, teachers are often unsure how to handle conflicts that emerge in the classroom dealing with student issues surrounding cultural identity or circumstance. Many conflicts are either handled by teachers exerting power over a class, in which communication is one-sided, or else dealt with passively, in which any type of student interaction, positive or

negative, could occur (Maria LaRusso & Robert Selman, 2011, p 355). It is uncommon in some schools for instructors to step in and facilitate conversation to help students understand each other's perspectives and reevaluate their own, although it is a skill that teachers could learn in a short time and integrate into a wide variety of lessons. While the premise of conflict resolution may be daunting to some educators with so many other responsibilities, the principles of CRS are quite simple: listening actively, thinking before reacting, attacking the problem and not each other, accepting responsibility, using direct communication, looking for common interests, and focusing on the future ("Principles of Conflict Resolution," 2014). The ability for educators to utilize the unique environment the arts classroom offers for CRS is not only helpful for maintaining a peaceful classroom, but essential to young people because "the formation of interpersonal relationships precedes the emergence of successful learning" (Jane Tobbell & Victoria O'Donnell, 2013, p 2). This paper proposes specific methods in which, through curriculum design that incorporates CRS techniques, educators can help students better understand cultural differences before they emerge as conflicts.

Participation in the arts are widely agreed upon to have significant and lasting positive effects on the academic and social success of young people (Lois Hetland, 2013, p 9). When CRS are implemented, the benefits increase and become more transferrable to other areas of their lives. Of these benefits, some of the most notable are teamwork, responsible risk-taking, regular self-reflection, countering bias, fostering cooperation and expanded perception abilities (Brunson, 2002, p 5; Laura Costello, 1995, p 42). Conflict resolution integrated arts settings create constructive learning environments where students are respected and can openly share ideas (Brunson, 2002, p 5). In addition, these settings create opportunities for young people to interact with others whom they "might not gravitate towards in the ordinary course of school life,

including students from other economic strata and racial groups” (Edward Fiske, 1999, p 15). Students struggling with difficult living conditions can find solace in an arts classroom where cultural, ethnic, economic and ability differences are shared openly, and regularly. Young people “can feel ashamed of what they are,” (Judith Gross, 1991, p 17) but conflict resolution in arts programs can help “teach them about a heritage they can be proud of” (Costello, 1995, p 32).

CRS integration is not only for students from a culture that is not commonly considered a dominant culture. CRS is also meant for students of dominant cultures to realize commonalities with their peers. Integrating strategies can help students develop skills “to make choices in real life situations, increase understanding and appreciate different cultures” (Costello, 1995, p 43; Sharon Joy, 2006, p 3). So often interpersonal differences are “based on the notion that the ‘others’ need help rather than an understanding on the basis of what they creatively do as equal citizens of the modern world” (June Bianchi, 2011, p 291). When students participate and share in common experiences, “outsiders become, to a limited extent, insiders; cultural barriers are breached; outsiders learn another culture’s way of presenting itself” (Joy, 5). Providing space for “outsiders” to becoming “insiders” is a driving goal of CRS in multicultural art education, where the purpose is not so much to resolve interpersonal conflicts but rather make them more visible through artistic collaboration and thus easier to deconstruct.

Unfortunately, schools are sometimes thought of as “arenas for cultural assimilation” and those students who do not fit the prescribed cultural groups often find themselves bound into minority groups. This can create conflict around which versions of cultural identity should be exhibited in the classroom (Patthey-Chavez, 1993, p 33). In fact, cultural assimilation was once a component of multicultural education, a paradigm referred to as “Teaching the Culturally Different” as discussed in this paper and outlined by Grant & Sleeter (1987). The manner in

which art is taught today still exhibits some components of this paradigm, as art education is often taught through the singular cultural lens of the teacher and students are sometimes asked to conform their viewpoints to this lens. While this may occur unintentionally, it is no less apparent to students who are marginalized by the curriculum. One of the easiest ways to remedy this is to provide more opportunities for student input and dialogue about curriculum structure and content.

While class discussion is a component in many classrooms, it is less commonly a component of secondary visual art education and even more rarely structured in a manner consistent with the principles of CRS. Anne Colby & Elizabeth Beaumont (2007) refer to CRS as “political deliberation skills,” including such skills as, “listening carefully, considering competing claims, grounding opinions in knowledge and evidence, evaluating underlying assumptions, looking for common ground, engaging different perspectives with civility and respect, balancing open mindedness with passion and commitment, and being genuinely open to reconsidering ones own positions” (Colby & Beaumont, pp. 159-161). Whether understood as CRS, political deliberation skills, or by another term, one of the major priorities of a democratic classroom is the opportunity for meaningful peer-to-peer dialogue. “Helping students articulate, critically examine and develop their own beliefs ... is very difficult; it is not discussed sufficiently in concrete terms by multicultural education practitioners” (Sleeter, 1991, p 22). Echoing Freire (1974) and Dewey (1934), it is not helpful to tell students how or what to think, and it is even less helpful to tell them how or what to believe (Sleeter, p 22).

Integrating CRS empowers students to cultivate the skills and knowledge they deserve to settle their own disputes, whether class-related interpersonal conflicts or larger conflicts they encounter as they enter the workforce or higher education. In addition, CRS sends the message to

students that no matter where teachers and students are coming from culturally, everyone enters the classroom with the intention to understand each other a little better, treat one another with respect and hold themselves accountable for their actions. As noted by Joni Acuff (2012), the environment CRS creates is one of equality, wherein a teacher is a leader but also a student. Establishing such a relationship is an essential starting place for students to feel comfortable sharing and growing together (Acuff, p 91). In addition, as stated by Sleeter (1991), “teachers do not empower or disempower anyone, nor do schools. They merely create the conditions under which people can empower themselves” (p 15). While teachers can empower students by noticing what needs are not being met and reaching out to meet them or accidentally disempower them by promulgating negative stereotypes, this paper proposes that the classroom environment is more productive to student learning with the integration of CRS.

A CURRENT LOOK AT MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

The majority of multicultural education theory is nearly two decades old, with little pedagogy emerging since then that is significantly different than Grant & Sleeter’s from the late 1980s and early 1990s. In many classrooms, “multicultural education” refers to a few “cultural” art lessons a year, with little discussion before or after that asks students to think critically, reexamine assumptions, or relate cultural objects, histories, and celebrations to their own cultural experiences. The discussion that exists within classrooms is at times inaccurate, incomplete, and even includes oppressive terminology, promulgating the “other” and “normal” dichotomy.

As stated by Acuff (2012), “teaching historical cultural practices like African mask making and Mexican day of the dead projects” supports this dichotomy because “white students

rarely see themselves as central within multiculturalism and diversity. Multiculturalism is always something that is separate from them, something they must embrace, accept or tolerate” (p 87).

This notion that multiculturalism is something separate from “white students” is especially important in certain states where Caucasian it is still the dominant race. While identifying as Caucasian does not denote one’s entire ethnicity or cultural background, incorporating multicultural education in a classroom that is largely composed of Caucasian-identifying students may be a different experience than in a classroom with a more diverse ethnic makeup. Those who identify with a particular culture, race or ethnicity may or may not feel that their identities are supported in their school’s curriculum. In addition, white students should not be mistaken for being “without” a cultural identity. Due to the rapidly changing ethnic makeup in some schools and the more stagnant makeup of others, schools should work to celebrate each student, as well as possible, revising curriculum as appropriate.

_____ In any classroom, multiculturalism should be structured as so all students can find where their cultural identities fit in to the content. Research suggests that when students can visualize themselves and their identities in the curriculum at school, they learn more, attend more regularly, and participate more actively (Acuff, 2012, p 87). These are all central goals to the most recent pushes in education, such as STEM to STEAM initiatives, and 21st Century Skills. In my personal experience, when all students feel like they belong, they are more likely to share with others the point of view they bring to a multicultural project, which is essential for multicultural art education lessons to be successful. Sara Wilson McKay (2007) describes meaningful art education as a scenario where “students and teachers safeguard and utilize their curiosity,” requiring “a variety of answers to questions” and “an interest in viewing things from more than one point of view so that complexity is investigated, not simplified” (p 156). This

sentiment of investigating the complexity of multiculturalism recalls the role of students as “problem seekers or raisers” (Clements & Wachowiak, 2006, p 169). The encouragement of dialogue in the classroom and a belief among teachers in multicultural education as a cultivation of what each student individually needs catalyzes curiosity rather than stunting it (McKay, p 159).

McKay (2007) goes on to suggest that as long as schools are considered factories where students are items on an assembly line, “a fixed body of deposited knowledge”, replicated to perform skills necessary for the work place, they will remain unprepared for situations that require creativity, experimentation, and critical judgment (p 158). This is where McKay advocates for the “school as studio” approach in which value is placed on “collective wisdom, group decision making and a community that is larger than the sum of its parts” (p 161). This “school as studio” approach inherently “disrupts ingrained social biases” and creates space for the making of meaning (McKay, p 162). The “critical arts pedagogy” suggests that multicultural artwork to “interacts with life and community concerns and is contextualized in human values,” that is, “an interpersonal shared meaning” (McKay, p 163). Multicultural art education which promotes a positive cultural identities contributes to the world outside itself, making learning more meaningful and cultivating a shared meaning between students and the larger community.

Melanie Davenport (2003) notes a relatively recent shift in education pedagogy regarding the importance of understanding diversity in schools. “Attending to difference seems fundamental to the project of building tolerance, dialogue and cooperation” (p 119). Davenport explains the role art teachers play in cultivating the awareness of difference and why it is so important. She states, “it empowers individuals to interrogate the interconnections and mutual influences among different types and levels of culture sharing groups, from local community to

global domain” (p 119). Davenport suggests that one way to go about “interrogating the interconnections” is for classrooms to consider how their own school community has developed over time with all the attached social dynamics – “layers”, as she refers to them as – that go along with the community (p 119). Providing space for students to delay, deconstruct and discuss the community they are situated within, including the diverse groups of people who inhabit it presently and historically “sets the stage for students to begin telling their own stories to the world, so that they can learn about each other, from each other” (Davenport, p 120). This sharing of personal and cultural narratives, comparing and contrasting experiences with others is inherently a creative act, and the art classroom provides the perfect space to catalyze such learning. Art teachers can catalyze student participation by showing them ways to make connections through physical artwork or other digital multimedia platforms (Davenport, 121). Platforms such as Skype and YouTube – especially useful to this type of learning – are expanded upon constantly and allow students to access the personal narratives of many cultures they might otherwise not have access to. By witnessing the experiences of others and being encouraged to think critically, students are able to “construct new understandings about the connections between the global and the local” (p 122). Whenever possible, it is encouraged to bring experts into the classroom, whether physically or through a multimedia platform. Learning from others, especially about traditional art techniques, is a crucial element of multicultural art education.

Doug Blandy & Paul Bolin (2003) assert that implementing “material culture studies” helps art educators re-contextualize their visual arts lessons to be most helpful to students in “understanding and appreciating their cultural heritage(s)” (p 246). Material culture studies can help students visualize “the interaction of images, music, architecture, performance, storytelling, the design of computer code and the multitude of other materials that shape and define culture”

(p 247). “Objects, environments and experiences” (Blandy & Bolin, p 251) beyond those typically associated with visual arts are intrinsically important to art education studies (McKay, 2007, p 163; Davenport, 2003, p 119). “Material culture studies” accepts objects as data for human activity, and attempts to interpret and investigate the intention, history, purpose and relevance of those objects to current practice (Blandy & Bolin, pp 251-252), which is inherently multidisciplinary and sensitive to multicultural education theory. As suggested by Blandy & Bolin, “A healthy, vital and sustainable democracy requires a citizenry educated around cultural issues of individual and collective concern as well as having the capability to consider such issues from a critical perspective” (p 246).

PRAXIS

INTRODUCTION TO UNIT PLANS

This next section explains how I’ve taken theoretical framework above – including democratic education, multicultural art education and conflict resolution – and applied it by proposing multicultural unit plans for secondary art students.

The following unit introductions give an overview to some of the problematic areas of each topic area, and suggest better ways to teach Dia de los Muertos, Native American arts, and African mask making. In each introduction, I propose specific ways that these unit lesson plans can be structured through CRS integration and best practices in multicultural education so that students take away lifelong skills in cultural appreciation, interpersonal communication, critical

thinking and thoughtful artistic expression – all things that encourage the positive development of their cultural identities.

The proposed lesson plans could be categorized as “Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist” as outlined by Grant & Sleeter (1987). They provide opportunities for and prepare students to challenge inequality, cultural appropriations and promote appreciation for multicultural cultures and peoples. The lesson plans could also be labeled as “Multicultural Education” as they promote social equality by reforming curricula so that it reflects the students in each classroom, especially those students who are often underserved (Grant & Sleeter, p 422).

* * *

Quality multicultural education is at times improvisational because it doesn’t resort to cookie-cutter lesson plans. Improvisational education does not mean it is unplanned or unstructured; it means that there is room for students to integrate their own personal narratives into the classroom, feel heard by their peers and teachers, critique their learning experiences and discover the interests and passions of their peers. The unit plans presented in this paper embrace the vision of a democratic classroom; a community in which the needs, interests and cultural identities of students are respected, met, and transforming alongside the identities of the students. Truly meaningful and lasting learning takes place when opportunities to improvise are combined with a framework supporting multicultural art making with special care to respect and protect the contributions of all cultural groups associated.

The three attached unit have the following topics:

- **Engaging Life & Death:** How do cultural groups around the world understand death and celebrate their departed loved ones?

- **Stories & Sustainability:** What can we learn from indigenous groups about sustainable farming practices and the cyclical nature of living things?
- **Behind the Mask:** Why do so many cultural groups around the world use masquerade as a part of their ceremonies and celebrations?

ENGAGING LIFE & DEATH

Current Problems

The Dia de Los Muertos celebration provides a range of popular arts and craft activities for teachers to give their students. While many teachers intend for the art lessons they provide to give students insight into cultural art making, there can be unintended and less positive outcomes. When no more than a day or two is devoted to the activity without ample time given to explain the rich cultural and historical significance of the celebration, students can unwittingly go forth promulgating stereotypes with their artistic creations. As stated by Susanne Schmitt (2013), well-intended representations of the celebration such as costume making, sugar skull crafting or altar decorating can “draw on orientalist fantasies about Mexico... ‘the stoic Mexican looking death straight in the eye and laughing at it’Throwing colorful and noisy fiestas makes it easy to reduce all of Mexico and all Mexicans to such a metaphor regardless of the regional and individual differences of commitment to the event” (p 2). While Schmitt offers the sentiments above in relation to informal multicultural education settings, they are relevant in formal education as middle and high school students in any setting are grappling with their sense of belonging and the visual culture which surrounds them plays a significant role in helping them define their transforming cultural identities. The Dia de los Muertos celebration is best taught in

middle or high school settings when notions of cultural appropriation can be critiqued and respectful appreciation of those cultures can be taught.

Some reasons for problematic multicultural art education are a product of forces outside the classroom, such as a lack of regular teacher training about multicultural education to keep up with the changing demographics in student populations or the beliefs of state and local education policy makers and the effect of those beliefs on what is prioritized in the classroom. Still, the classroom is a prime location to teach students skills to show cultural respect and middle and high school is a good time to focus on teaching these skills as adolescents have an overwhelming desire to fit in with social groups (Wachowiak & Clements, 2010, p 229). Middle school is the perfect time to have such conversations with students, when they are at an age where it is developmentally appropriate to ask them to think critically about the differences between cultural appropriation and appreciation (Wachowiak & Clements, p 230). Providing middle school students with ways to partake in celebrations, particularly those originating from cultures they do not identify with, is a timely art education lesson as those middle school students can take with them to participate in high school and college celebrations with a greater degree of cultural awareness.

Popular elementary lesson plans surrounding the holiday include coloring pages of flowers, bread and tombstones, the making of paper Maché skulls, the constructing of paper skeletons or an altar (Paintbrush Rocket, 2012; Thaneeya McArdle, 2015). After such lessons, students may leave with some greater understanding of the similarities and differences between Halloween and Dia de los Muertos, but often little understanding of other cultures that celebrate their departed, why objects and imagery associated with Dia de los Muertos should be treated with care and respect or why the celebrations are relevant to their own lives and traditions. As

stated by Jackson (2008), “Cultural participation is often interpreted only as audience participation” (p 94). In this way, a Dia de los Muertos lesson plan that doesn’t involve any community members who celebrate the holiday or call on the experiences of students is incomplete.

Due to the rising popularity of Dia de los Muertos celebrations in the United States, many companies have taken to producing Dia de los Muertos-themed toys and costumes to sell to those who largely do not celebrate the holiday. This commercialization of a holiday that is meant to celebrate the loving connection between the living and their departed has perpetuated negative stereotypes and highlights only portions of the celebration, resulting in other parts to be forgotten. “The iconography and material culture of the holiday has become... politically reinvented... part of the visual culture of the rockabilly, Mexican tourism industry” (Schmitt, 2013, p 8). Rachel Gonzalez (2007) agrees with Schmitt that Dia de los Muertos is often “re-functionalized” in the United States, and leads to stereotypes such as the “morbid Mexican” (para 2). Celebrations and instruction about Dia de los Muertos often include what Gonzales calls the “ultimate paradox...that the very holiday responsible for producing a stereotype of the stoic Mexican, who longs for death, is actually a powerful affirmation of life and creativity” (para 3). Overwhelmed with access to plastic sombreros, mustaches and ponchos, many students are left unprepared to comprehend the layers of grief and joy surrounding the holiday.

Suggestions for Improvement

As Dia de los Muertos is celebrated close in time to Halloween, the two holidays can often end up profited on jointly and celebrated in tandem, rather than for the separate and unique

contributions they make to American culture and cultures around the world. The attached unit plan, “Engaging Life & Death” aims to bridge geographic gaps through artistic exploration, research and “culturally textured responses to death and dying” (Gonzalez, 2007, para 6). “Engaging Life & Death” also aims for students, as Gonzalez states, to “gain perspective on the nature and diversity of communities... through analyses of multiple festival contexts” (para 6). Students will be expected to explore, compare, contrast and artistically represent a number of the cultural celebrations around the world that celebrate the lives and passing of the departed.

There are sensory-centered components of a traditional Dia de los Muertos celebrations that can become meaningful pieces of classroom education; this includes but is not limited to the smell of food and fresh flowers and the sound of music playing. “The event is marked by visual, auditory and olfactory clues...although the memories of the deceased are individual ones, the place that enabled the production of memory was a shared and orchestrated one that had temporarily been carved out of urban space through the creative and strategic use of smells, sounds and lighting” (Schmitt, 2013, p 8). Secondary art education classrooms can become these “urban spaces”, re-contextualized as spaces for celebration with sensory components added by students rather than orchestrated by teachers. In “Engaging Life & Death” students may choose to learn techniques in cooking and food preparation as an art form. Other students may choose to collect fresh flowers to thoughtfully display. Students will have the opportunity to, as suggested by Schmitt, “narrate the intimate relationships of food, memory and social relations” through their artistic process and ending work exhibitions (p 5). What is prepared and presented by students should intimately reflect what students take away from the “Bring in the Experts” component of the unit, whether that means learning from an expert in person, via Skype, vetted YouTube instructional videos, emails or handwritten letters. Of course, not all students will be

asked to research Dia de los Muertos, but the suggestions above are applicable to learning about many types of cultural celebrations.

STORIES & SUSTAINABILITY

Current Problems

There are a number of times in K-12 education that Native American history is referenced. The first time is often in elementary school when learning about the colonization of America, and then again when being introduced to cultural traditions and arts, and in high school, during discussion of different types of government structures. In all these instances, there is a chance that misinterpreted or completely false information is spread from teacher to students about historical Native American – white relations and representations of Native American arts and stories. From misinterpreted information emerges a range of problematic outcomes, many of which begin with terminology.

Students and teachers often ask why one must use the term ‘Native Americans’ or ‘American Indians’ rather than ‘Indians’ alone. As stated by Steve Willis (2002), “Indians live in India, not North America. Shamans are indigenous to the Tungus nomads of Siberia, not North America, so ‘Indian Shamans’ is particularly bothersome” (p 90). Modeling behavior by using correct terminology and correcting students when necessary is the first lesson in cultural respect. Unfortunately, using incorrect terminology is only one of the potentially offensive things non-Native Americans do to Native Americans.

The context and imagery used by teachers to introduce Native American culture, history and arts is another area that often leads to misinterpretation. Willis (2002) notes that “Native American individuals appear within history only to the extent that they appear to personalize the fortunes of the tribe” such as “saddened Chief Joseph” or “sullen Geronimo” which symbolize “not living people but the historical fate of a nation overwhelmed by the inevitability of history” (p 82). These figureheads, torn from their histories and molded to fit stereotypes is just one way that non-Native Americans have denied Native Americans the respect they deserve. Willis feels that history is sometimes taught in a way that teachers and students acknowledge Native Americans as “objects of study” but not “subjects of history” (p 83). To compare, United States Presidents are studied for their contributions to the nation at the time they governed and the way those contributions have rippled through to present day administration. In my experience as a student and witness to classroom learning, when the contributions of Native American leaders and peoples are taught, the ways in which their contributions are still relevant today are often left out of the conversation. Further, the contributions of present day Native Americans are rarely discussed.

Willis (2002) finds it problematic that in many schools, “Indians have folklore, not culture; practice superstitions, not religions; speak dialects, not languages; make crafts, not arts” (p 88). Some teachers may not feel that referring to Native American stories as folklore or Native American artwork as craft is oppressive. However, using the term “craft” rather than “art” can downplay the individual who made the work as well as the overall contribution of Native American art to the development of arts and cultures in the United States.

“Some non-Natives may look through an art book on Native Americans and see a distorted, red face and not know that the face was carved from a living tree, that it is a healing face that belongs to

a sacred society. Some may see a kachina as an interesting decoration or quaint doll of wood and feathers and not know it is a spiritual vessel carved from a cottonwood tree root. Some may see a summer count blanket and think it is merely an interesting but primitive way of drawing horses and people, not recognizing it as recorded history” (Willis, 2002, p 88).

The types of misinterpretations Willis notes in the quote above could be attributed to differences in individual perception, though perception alone cannot be used as an excuse for ignorance. Still, one of the goals of multicultural art education is to challenge students to think critically and alter their perceptions when necessary. In this way, talking about the role of perception when it comes to Native American art and history is important.

In the arts, marketing and entertainment sectors, the notion of perception is becoming a larger topic of conversation as digital media plays a strong role in the identities of many American teenagers. Those who are interested in sports may see the Kansas City Chiefs or the Washington Redskins on television and notice fans carrying plastic tomahawks, wearing chicken feather headdresses and shouting war chants and perceive such behaviors as Native American cultural reality (Amy Stretten, 2013, para 5-10). Other teenagers might watch movies where Native Americans are only found in the desert or in the Great Plains, depicted as primitive or dangerous and perceive those images to be truth. As stated by James Bequette (2007), “generalizations that all Indians are Plains Indians or idyllic notions of Native peoples being noble savages or Indian princesses ignores the diversity of living tribal cultures and perpetuates negative and self-serving stereotypes of the American Indian held by non-Indians that are deeply embedded in American life” (pp 370-371). Further, Bequette notes that images and videos depicting the “harsh realities of reservation life” do not help improve perception or “lead to a

thoughtful understanding of the future potential for American Indians, the resilience of native societies or potential for reclaiming, reformulating and reconstructing indigenous cultures and languages” (p 371). Presenting information that is negative or false isn’t helpful, but presenting overly romanticized information is perhaps just as problematic in how it dictates the perception of Native American groups. Imagery that perpetuates the notion that all Native Americans are “one with nature and quintessential stewards of the land” is to unfairly perceive Native Americans as one assimilated group (Bequette, p 371).

To teach students the true history of Native American - white relations without also telling stories of positive encounters or to present a romanticized version of reality is to perpetuate stereotype – contrary to the good intentions of many teachers (Bequette, 2007, p 372; Willis, 2002, p 88). Certainly, the notion of who Native Americans are cannot be explained in a single narrative, and thus teaching from a single lens viewpoint will not be helpful. Teachers must ask themselves if they are sending the message that they represent the ultimate authority or if their classroom welcomes a democratic experience where students and teachers of all backgrounds can explore Native American art, culture and history together. Ideally, all individuals should play a part in their multicultural education as if actors on stage working to write their own scripts to figure out a solution. Even with state and national standards guiding curriculum, teachers have the power to reevaluate what they feel is most important.

Suggestions for Improvement

Teachers and students shouldn’t be the only ones who are consulted in the implementation of Native American education. Willis (2002) states, “perception is only changed

through personal experience” (89). Outside experts should be brought in, as students shouldn’t be taught what it is like to be Native American. Instead, they should be asked to listen to the stories and experiences of others. “The primary work of effective schools should be to form partnerships with local communities to frame the goals of education and roles and responsibilities of those involved in supporting students in reaching those goals” (Bequette, 2007, p 365). According to Bequette, bringing in experts not only increases firsthand experience, but it also creates opportunities to build community partnerships, ignite within students a sense of confidence, belonging and of potential to contribute to their community and society (p 365). In addition, where there is the opportunity for students to learn from experts and even recognize their peers as experts in their own experiences, at least one of their basic needs as individuals, a sense of belonging, is being met (Brunson, 2002, p 13). This sense of belonging is enhanced by the integration of CRS, when peer-to-peer dialogue is a priority before and after periods of listening to experts. Further, it is more difficult for students to retain a mono-cultural perspective or continue to perpetuate cultural stereotypes when exposed to multiple perspectives delivering information in person (Willis, p 81). This notion of prioritizing peer-to-peer and student-to-expert relationships in the learning process recalls an earlier statement, that “the formation of interpersonal relationships precedes the emergence of successful learning” (Jane Tobbell & Victoria O’Donnell, 2013, p 2). CRS integration into unit plans is more clearly outlined following this section.

Multicultural lessons about Native American arts may benefit from a less formal structure than other multicultural unit plans. In some cases, Native Americans experience a type of education that is less structured, but with ample room for experimentation, questioning and unexpected opportunities for learning (Willis, 2002, p 83). In a sense, adopting this structure into

formal multicultural education may be appropriate as a lesson in itself. “My learning has been of the moment, in what some might describe as a classroom without walls. The elders who have taught specific things at opportune moments have directed these learning experiences. Mostly, these were my experiences of discovering who I am” (Willis, p 84). He compares the role of classroom teachers to his elders, that teachers should provide experiences that are demanding and difficult as students explore and allow their perceptions to change through hands-on experimentation (p 85). An example of unexpected learning might be a teacher challenging a less outgoing student to make a phone call to a local expert or a student who has never tried weaving to try to make a Pacific Northwest Coast Native American weaved basket. To Willis, experiences effect perception, which in turn affect cultural understanding.

Additional components that effect student perception and experience are emotion and intuition. Teachers should model how to trust one’s intuition through artistic creation. Willis (2002) asserts that teachers should instruct “not to rely solely on the mind but to expand other sensitivities and ways of perceiving,” that “in drawing, marks represent qualities of emotions as well as sight” (p 87). It is important that students are expected to think both contextually and emotionally, drawing on their unique insights to reach a clearer understanding. Middle and high school students are continuously working through inner emotions as they grow and encounter new situations. Multicultural education is an outlet for sharing this type of invisible knowledge in a safe setting.

Learning to contextualize knowledge is also a good practice in relating what is learned about art and culture to other disciplines, especially environmental studies and history. Bequette (2007) states that “teaching Native art as part of school arts can serve to pass on traditional ecological knowledge while contextualizing colonialism’s influence on traditional and

contemporary Native arts practices” (p 360). If students are taught skills to contextualize what they are learning and alter their perceptions as they feel appropriate, education is no longer confined to the classroom. If, for example, after a visit from a local Native American tribe member who shares with students his or her understanding of sustainable agriculture, and students begin to point out to their friends and family the difficulty in sustainable farming practices, I feel the lesson has been successful. While it is ideal that multicultural art education includes many components –contextualized history, CRS, learning from an expert, peer-peer dialogue, the learning of art techniques – the importance of these lessons truly lie within the ability of students to respect another for their unique contributions.

It is worthwhile to mention the importance of using proper materials when possible. Traditional materials for Pacific Northwest Native Americans might include cedar wood, obsidian, or dyes made from local vegetation, although presently, Native Americans are also constructing traditional arts from more common arts materials. In any case, a public school art budget may not allow for some traditionally used materials. Still, using inexpensive recycled lumber or clay and painting it with dyes made by mixing acrylic powders with water is far more engaging than resorting to paper and markers. When using materials that have a learning curve, there is more room for failure, but also more room to build confidence and technical skill. Teachers should make it clear that perfection is not the goal, but taking a risk is. Using appropriate materials can put the necessary pressure on students to plan well, measure carefully and make every mark thoughtfully. Even if the process does not produce the desired product, the students will have committed themselves. As stated by Willis (2002), “my teachers committed to teach me and I committed to learn. By our act of commitment, we held each other accountable and fostered a particular worldview. I understood that learning and accountability must be active

for both the teacher and the student” (p 84). To uphold their end of the learning commitment, teachers should make work alongside their students whenever possible, and all learners, including the instructor, should commit to show finished work in a public display. Personal and peer accountability increases when students are looking forward to sharing their processes with their friends and families.

Many Native Americans understand perception through cyclical relationships, such as life and death, annual seasons and solar and lunar movements (Willis, 2002, 86). The growing seasons for crops is another important cycle for Native Americans, especially since over 60% of the foods Americans eat today were once cultivated and developed by Native Americans (Native American Contributions, 2015). While it is true that Native Americans understand perception through cycles to different degrees, and perhaps for some not at all, cycles are a great way for students to make connections between science, history and arts. Each of these disciplines relies heavily on give and take, beginnings and endings and through trial and failure, which actions are repeated and which are not.

“Stories and Sustainability” requires students to learn about historical and current practices, drawing their own conclusions about what has changed and what has not when it comes to growth, the environment and sustainability. Bequette (2007) argues that “if schools adapt a vibrant and innovative curricular approach to art and science education, children could be encouraged to develop the awareness, confidence and leadership necessary to address meaningful problems like loss of traditional indigenous knowledge and its ramifications in both depletion of natural environments and generalizing of cultural transmitted arts practices” (p 368). Beyond gaining a deeper understanding of current environmental concerns and visualizing them from multiple viewpoints, students will also learn about the local knowledge of their area

surrounding issues important to them. In asking questions such as “are there symbolic relationships between indigenous peoples and their local ecosystems?” and “is ecologically responsible resource management part of traditional arts practices?” students are given the opportunity to see themselves as stewards of their own sustainable practices (or lack of), finding greater purpose in the ‘green movement’ (Bequette, 2007, p 362). Students may not be the only ones benefiting from a lesson such as “Stories & Sustainability”, as it can be positive for experts to be called upon and listened to. Willis (2002) states “a renewed interest in the arts practices of local indigenous cultures can help stabilize these unique American Indian cultures, empowering artists and helping them recognize the efficacy of carrying on the identities and accomplishments of their tribal ancestors” (p 363). In the cyclical fashion most appropriate for a lesson such as “Stories & Sustainability”, both students and other community members involved may gain forward momentum in their work.

BEHIND THE MASK

Current Problems

For many middle and high school students, “trying on new masks” is a method for discovering their identities. Whether physical or psychological, masks enable an individual to express something inside them, often something that is rarely shown to others. “Masks, like hats, can change our image – what we communicate to others about who and what we are, do, and how valued our status is in the society” (June McFee & Rogena Degge, 1980, p 305). The purpose of multicultural art education is to provide opportunities for students to learn skills in cultural appreciation, increase their self-esteem, understand their personal narratives and those of

their peers better. Thus, mask making is quite logical as an art activity. In elementary school, students are often asked to make masks by cutting holes in paper bags or coloring paper plates and adding craft sticks. Middle and high school students are developmentally ready to move beyond the paper plates and bags. They are spending large portions of their days thinking about their developing cultural identities and the way they fit in or do not fit in with their peers (Clements & Wachowiak, 2010, p 230). Paper maché masks are a popular material choice in upper elementary and middle school, while ceramic masks gain popularity in upper middle and high school as the material allows for more attention to detail and more room for individual expression.

In many classrooms, mask making is already instructed in a multicultural context. The making and/or wearing of masks are an important part of a number of cultures around the globe and tend to reveal values important to a culture (Cho, 1998, p 72). Masks hold inherent value as artifacts; this may be especially true to students who identify with a cultural group that uses masks in ceremony or celebration. However, for those students who were raised in the United States with a predominantly Western worldview, masks may not initially make the list when discussing artifacts, apart from masks worn for Halloween or other entertainment. Middle and high school students often think they know what art is or is not when walking into the art classroom, and preconceived notions may tell them that masks are costume, and costume is not an art. Cho argues “masks are useful in teaching art because they are the least ambiguous of all art forms” (p 72). By studying masks, students can make personal connections to history, world cultures, and the functionality of art, widely broadening their view of what art is or is not.

In addition, mask making is rarely seen as an opportunity for students to express their own cultural identities while learning about the various cultural identities that masks represent.

The lack of opportunity to make learning relevant can result in “othering” of global cultures. African mask lessons are popular due to the variety in shape, style, texture and color (Robert Basso, 1990, p 28). Unfortunately, while there are currently 54 countries in Africa, students too often walk away with the idea that by studying one or two cultures through masks, they understand the culture of the entire continent – which is not only false, but impossible. The following quote by Basso illustrates that even the best intentions can be undercut by “othering” and unwittingly promulgate that mask making is only done by ‘primitive’ people. When thinking back to an experience at the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History, Basso states, “whenever I think of masks, I automatically think ‘primitive’; faces with sea shells, earth skin tones, and natural hair fills my mind” (p 29). While Basso ultimately incorporates new materials into his mask-making lesson – feathers, glitter, leather, various new fabrics – the questions remains; is using appropriate materials with ample cultural context enough to create a quality multicultural art lesson?

Suggestions for Improvement

It is first important to include more than one culture in the discussion and mask examples with a wide range of styles, shapes, textures and meanings. Even if the teacher wants African masks to be the focus, the lesson should be supplemented, for example, with Arctic masks, Korean masks and perhaps Greco-Roman masks to discuss the variance in style, structure and meaning. Comparing and contrasting masks from around the world asks students to draw conclusions about diversity in art and culture, as well as status, role, and value. For example, Korean masks are used in dance dramas and portray over ten dance styles. In addition, Korean

masks show that “Korean culture values tradition; hierarchical social structure is reinforced through attire about those at the top through the masks... classical Greco –Roman masks illustrate heroic, superhuman, deified qualities in comparison with the human, individualized expressions of Korean masks or the spiritual entities represented by African masks used in rituals and initiations” (Cho, 1998, p 71). If possible, physical examples of masks should be provided so students can compare and contrast the detailed differences in form while simultaneously being able to reference comparisons in meaning.

Mask-making lessons should also include ample discussion about how the elements of art are incorporated; how “colors, lines, textures, forms are used to create qualities that make people react differently to a person with a mask than they would to someone without the mask” (McFee & Degge, 1980, p 305). There should be discussion about why certain materials are used instead of others, and relate material choices to functionality and décor. By high school, students should be expected to use thoughtful, descriptive language in tandem with this lesson, noting the characteristics of masks and the relatedness between them. In a world with masks that can be at once humorous and dignified or powerful and careless, a conversation about masks cannot begin and end in one class period (McFee & Degge, p 305).

Perhaps most importantly, a central objective to multicultural mask making should be the relevance that masks have in the lives of the students. As Basso (1990) questioned while viewing masks, students should be asking why some masks appear fearsome and others appear happy, who wore them, how they were made and how the maker of the mask learned his or her trade. (Basso, p 28). To make mask art relevant to their own lives, students should consider when they have worn masks, literally or figuratively, and for what reason, how those masks have appeared to others and changed over time. Students should discuss how they understand the idea of

costume and find out how their sentiments compare and contrast with those of their peers. Especially when dealing with masks they don't understand, students should continue to ask questions such as "what uses does the headgear have? What does it tell us about whom the wearer is? How does it make the wearer feel? What kinds of things will the person do? What does it tell us about the status of the person? What influence will it have on how others behave? How much space will someone wearing the hat require?" (Mcfee & Degge, 1980, p 305). When it comes to masks, which hold an inherent and transforming mysteriousness, the only way to arrive at a current understanding is to continuously ask questions and reevaluate the answers that others have given in years past.

Ultimately, a successful multicultural mask-making lesson will empower students to be more transparent in their art and in their lives. When students are rewarded for work that places them in potentially vulnerable situations, and asked to dig deep and rely on creative intuition for answers, they are telling themselves that what they have within them is enough and taking a risk is the only obstacle between themselves and their personal best. If masks can allow students to express themselves without risk, so can students learn to express themselves without needing to try on as many 'masks.'

A GUIDE TO INTEGRATING (CRS) IN MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION

This paper provides suggestions for ways secondary multicultural art education curriculum can be structured to best encourage positive cultural identity among students. Conflict Resolution Strategies (CRS) can be integrated into lesson plans as a framework for cultivating meaningful dialogue, encouraging critical thinking and self-reflection among students. In this paper, CRS it is not a disciplinary method or even a guarantee for peacekeeping – it is a tool to help enhance overall student participation, which in turn helps encourage positive cultural identity.

CRS is a structural framework of the following unit plans attached as appendices. It was chosen to address the gap in CRS education in middle and high school and to help structure the learning experiences of potentially sensitive material. As stated by Brunson (2002), “conflict exists as a natural part of life. It is what people in conflict do with the experience that determines whether it will be constructive or destructive... almost every conflict involves an endeavor of individuals to meet their basic physiological needs” (p 13). It is important for teachers to be prepared for difficult conversations about identity, oppression, and overall differences in perception. Integrating CRS as a framework to help students frame conversations in meaningful ways is to advocate for informed young adults who are better prepared to tackle the difficult issues they will encounter post-graduation (Grant, 2012, p 914). To some extent, the way students treat each other in middle and high school may foreshadow the way they will treat each other post-graduation.

CRS is referred to with a range of designations, such as “political deliberation skills” as utilized by Colby et al. (2010). Some teachers may refer to CRS as classroom management

strategies. The benefit of a classroom adopting a set of conflict resolution strategies (CRS) is that a clear and distinct expectation is set from the moment students enter the classroom, built by the students themselves, and is internalized over time – lasting long after the class is over. These strategies are not used as punishment and they do not wait for conflict to occur. In addition, unlike typical classroom management strategies, they are not hidden from students. When teenagers are well aware of the consequences, held accountable to their actions and expected to work through their own conflicts, with help when needed, they will be more prepared to approach conflict outside of their school lives (Abbas Turnuklu, 2010, p 71).

The first way in which CRS are incorporated into the following unit plans is through the writing of a “class pact”. The one provided below is partially adapted from Clements & Wachowiak (2010), but if utilized, should be written by each class students with the facilitation of their teacher.

Class Pact

As students and teacher(s), we promise that as we research, create and discuss this unit we will be careful to not:

- Homogenize racial or ethnic groups into one
 - Let us or our classmates make undefended assumptions that perpetuate bias
 - Ignore the value of the art we see- if we can't see it, we'll look a little closer
 - Mix up the past and present when discussing cultural groups
 - Assign characteristics to an entire culture or people based on an individual
 - Paint a culture as 'exotic' or 'primitive' but instead recognize their uniqueness
 - Minimize the contributions of cultural groups to the rest of the world
- (Clements & Wachowiak, 2010, p 81)

A “class pact” acts similarly as a set of class rules, but when written by those whom they govern, the rules promote a type of democracy – a situation that conflict resolution theorists agree leads to more personal accountability and a more cohesive community. Class pacts also generate trust (Brunson, 2002, p 35). For the purposes of this paper, the creation of a “class pact” is the same as the “create an agreement” component of CRS (Brunson, p 32). After creating their “class pact”, the class should agree on how they would like conflicts to be handled if they arise. While in some cases, the teacher will have the final word and may need to propose and uphold certain expectations, the majority of the rules and regulations of a classroom should be built from student input to increase agency.

In the unit plans attached, students are given an introduction to the lesson and then they are separated into groups. Brunson (2002) recommends both positioning students in small groups and as a whole class throughout a unit (p 35). In order to learn more about their topic at hand, groups will either work together or divide and conquer to answer given research questions to spearhead artistic inspiration and group discussion. After substantial research and learning from a community expert, the artistic production begins. This in itself is a common CRS technique used with children and adults alike – that no back and forth discussion occurs until all sides have had an adequate chance to learn about the issues at stake (Brunson, p 30). CRS also accounts for variance in learning styles and recognizes that not all individuals express or learn best through verbal discussion alone and need time to collect their thoughts before speaking or recollect after discussion before debriefing (Sarah Slayton, 2010, p 180).

After students complete their preliminary research, begin to test out their strengths and weaknesses working in a team and hear from an expert on their topic area, CRS dictates that each student has a chance to share their ideas to move forward in their project. As suggested by

Brunson (2002), each student should be encouraged to share, uninterrupted, beginning with statements such as “I feel...” and “I am very interested in ...” This is the “gathering points of view” conflict resolution strategy (p 31).

At this time, if possible, students should take a moment to note shared interests or ideas. This may take the form of a “group brainstorming” session where all interests that were just shared are drawn out on paper using words or images. By physically drawing lines from one student’s ideas to another or filling in the center of a Venn Diagram, commonalities and differences should be made visible. Making art as a group, even in the beginning stages of brainstorming requires “some physical engagement and problem solving,” which, as suggested by Slayton (2012), “elicits kinesthetic and cognitive activity through the creative process... focusing kinesthetic energy through creative building can assist [students] in attaining higher levels of developmental functioning instead of evoking chaotic emotional discharge” (p 181). Students should continue to be careful to use personal statements such as “I feel...” rather than pointed statements such as “He/she feels” to show they are listening and give space for other’s viewpoints. For some projects, it may be possible for students to simply summarize the interests of the student who shared before them before sharing their own.

Sharing interests and group brainstorming will likely incite differences in opinion to emerge. It is important that these differences aren’t seen as roadblocks, but instead opportunities for creativity and dialogue. Still, they can prove difficult for students to navigate on their own, so prompts should be provided to “diffuse” or “de-escalate” efforts (Brunson, 2002, p 15). One CRS diffusion strategy is much like the brainstorming activity discussed above; students can start by making a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast two or more cultures, or else, competing opinions, and work as a group to find common ground. The process through which

ideas transform into decisions about actual art production within the group is a crucial component of learning. On the day of a unit plan that students are beginning to make decisions, the class should begin with a lesson on decision-making. In conflict resolution there are four main types of decisions: accommodation, compromise, avoidance and collaboration.

Accommodation – one-person puts his needs aside to adjust to the position of another. When accommodating, a person tries to keep the peace in order to protect the relationship. Accommodating is useful when the issue is not important and the relationship needs protecting. A person who accommodates often defers to the needs of others over his own, which often results in the suppression of true feelings and unmet needs.

Compromise – both parties give up some degree of satisfaction in order to settle the conflict. Although most people accept the idea of compromise, it demands that both parties give up some of their needs and is rarely a fully satisfying or win-win solution. Compromising usually stops short of taking a deeper look at the real needs behind the problem, and misses the opportunity to provide real satisfaction.

Avoidance – a person resists admitting that a problem exists, or if he does recognize a problem, prefers to postpone dealing with it. Avoiding conflict usually results in win-lose or lose-lose solutions because there is no effort to search for a resolution that truly meets the needs of both sides.

Collaboration – finding creative solutions by working together to develop a common understanding and solutions to the conflict.
(Brunson, 2002, pp 13-15)

While each type of decision (accommodation, compromise, avoidance or collaboration) will likely be used by every student at some point in their lives, they should be expected to think about the way they tend to make decisions as individuals. For example, a more introverted student may tend to make group decisions in “avoidance” even though they hold within them thoughtful contributions and wish to share. On the other hand, a more extroverted student may

tend to dominate conversation and while group decisions may appear to be unanimous, it is because only one voice is heard, and the rest are accommodating that one voice. While multicultural art education aims for collaboration, compromise may be acceptable in certain circumstances. Teachers should ask students to give examples of when they have compromised in their group work and when they have collaborated to learn the difference.

If student groups go on to make a decision about the project and are unable to reach either compromise or collaboration, they should ask the teacher to intervene as a facilitator. At this point, the teacher may choose to introduce the CRS called creating “win-win options” (Brunson, 2002, p 14). This is when each student has a chance to share their interests, uninterrupted, with the addition of one supporting idea on how their group could reach a solution. Each student should share, and a commonality may arise. If it does not, the students should take a second look at the class pact. Does their proposed solution(s) follow all the rules? If any of the proposed project ideas breaks a component of the class pact, it should be removed or altered. Only those projects that follow the class pact in its entirety should move forward. If there are still unresolved issues, it is possible that students should make individual work surrounding the same overall theme, and revisit the conflict when all work is finished. For a unit with CRS integration, the art technique and cultural context gained is important, but the types of difficulties experienced by students along the way in their groups are perhaps just as valuable an experience. Collaboration can be quite difficult even when all individuals have the best intentions.

While the following CRS are not integrated until the middle and end of the art production, they are no less important to the overall CRS integration process. Midway through the art production, teachers should encourage students to stop where they are at and meet with

their groups. Similar to the beginning of the unit, each student should be given the opportunity to share how they feel the group is working together; i.e. how the art making is going and if there is any need for clarification. This is the “evaluate opinions” component of CRS. Students should ask themselves and their group members if their art products are resembling that of their initial ideas, if there are changes to be made to the plan, and if they are able to mold these changes to fit the interests and needs of the whole group (Brunson, 2002, 32). The group should “eliminate options that do not work and refine those that do” (p 34). Whether there is conflict within the group or not, the teacher should listen in on group discussion and urge students to clarify and specify their feelings about their actions or the actions of their group members. Students should use personal pronouns when speaking; i.e. “I feel.... I hear what you saying, and it makes me feel....” Instructors should beware the actions of students who tend to fill the role of “directors, enforcers, or competitors” (any student who uses force or bullying as a vice to win arguments). Teachers should be ready to “diffuse”, that is “de-escalate the conflict by lowering defenses and decreasing hostility” (Brunson, p 15).

One diffusion strategy is to change the pace by introducing a new activity. Depending on the interests among the group of students, different strategies may be more or less appropriate. It may be a good time to take a break and show a work of art about an escalating conflict. Students could point out how colors or compositions convey negative and positive views of conflict (Brunson, 2002, p 45). Very similar to the Visual Thinking Strategies pedagogy, students share what they notice in the work, including how they think the subjects in the work felt during the conflict (Clements & Wachowiak, 2010, p 75; Phillip Yenawine, 2013, p 15). In another CRS diffusion activity, the teacher may hand out paper and a drawing medium and ask students to express conflict through lines and shapes alone in an abstract drawing. Drawing then revisiting

the issue the following day may help de-escalate the tension students are facing (Brunson, p 46). In my experience, some students may even wish to make drawings about the conflict they are experiencing to share with their groups. For other may be helpful to speak about a conflict they have dealt with in their past, unassociated with the project at hand, share how it made them feel and if they wish they had done anything differently.

When the art making has concluded, the final but crucial component of a unit plan with a CRS framework is the evaluation. There should be a questionnaire, drawn from the class pact, learning objectives, and general questions about group dynamics given to each student. This is to help students “recognize their own fears, perceptions and assumptions” (Brunson, 2002, p 19). Some of the feedback given will be sensitive and students should not be expected to share all of their thoughts openly with the class. Still, either in small groups or as a class, students should share portions of their experiences. The surveys they filled out will be collected and reviewed by their teacher to take into consideration for the next multicultural art unit plans with CRS as a framework.

Wachowiak & Clements (2010) assert that students build a strong cultural identity through making art and by considering others, as long as there is the opportunity to ask questions such as, “why do people behave as they do? What influences how people learn and grow? How do people meet their basic needs?” (p 88). Unit plans with CRS as a framework creates opportunities for students to ask those questions about cultural groups around the world, and also ask those questions about themselves and their peers.

BEST PRACTICES IN MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION

To accompany the “class pact” (see pg. 59), which could be seen in itself as a set of best practices, the following is what I have synthesized as best practices in multicultural art education as I have drawn from dozens of sources, theory, personal experience and discussions with University of Oregon faculty. The practices are separated into two categories; curriculum and teaching strategies and student behaviors as quality multicultural education is a give and take learning experience, where the teacher is a facilitator but also a student and students are learners as well as teachers. Practices from both categories must be prioritized in a classroom wishing to implement quality multicultural art education.

Teachers facilitating Multicultural Art Education should...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that learning opportunities are not limited to the school walls; the community and the school should not be treated as segregated entities (Bequette, 2007; Willis, 2002). • Provide students ample opportunities for artistic self-expression and exploration as well as opportunities to share and reflect on the expressions of others without fear of inadequacy or judgment. The integration of CRS aids in this practice (Brunson, 2002; Slayton, 2012). • Act as facilitators, but be consistently open to learning from students and community members (Brunson, 2002). • Be transparent about personal bias whenever appropriate, and consistently encourage discussion of viewpoints that are not their own (Brunson, 2002). • Learn about the basic needs of students who may feel marginalized and ask what they can do to support their growth as a valued member of the classroom community (Grant, 2012; Sleeter, 1991). • Ensure that students are able to see themselves in what they are learning – students should be represented in the content of the curriculum, the type of dialogue and in what is expected of them (Grant, 2012). • Measure excellence in part by students’ demonstrated willingness to reevaluate their worldviews (Nussbaum, 1997; Slayton, 2012; Brunson, 2002). • Always give ample context to the topic at hand that is recent, relevant and fact-based (Bequette, 2007). • Recognize and point out stereotypes or stigmas as they emerge (Clements & Wachowiak, 2010). • Explicitly teach students how to practice cultural appreciation rather than

appropriation (McFee & Degee, 1980; Schmitt, 2013; Gonzalez, 2007).

- Invite community members associated with the content into the classroom as expert voices. Be sure to highlight student experts as well (Tobell & O'Donnell, 2013, Brunson, 2002)
- Engage the senses to help learning experiences be committed to memory (Schmitt, 2013).
- Use language carefully and cautiously, especially language denoting an entire group of people (Clements & Wachowiak, 2010).
- Allow the structure of a unit to change in accordance with its context. Some units may be more successful if structured more or less formally (Willis, 2002).
- Supply students with proper materials whenever necessary, and always aim for authenticity (Cho, 1998; McFee & Degee 1980; Basso, 1990).

Students studying Multicultural Art Education should....

- Ask of themselves and their peers, “what is true?” (McFee & Degee, 1980).
- Recognize and trust in their own expertness by asking “what do I know? How do I know what I know?” (McFee & Degee, 1980).
- Allow their emotions and intuitions to affect their learning and artistic processes (Willis, 2002).
- Reevaluate their perceptions as they feel compelled (Willis, 2002).
- Embrace taking risks in a safe space (Clements & Wachowiak, 2010; Brunson, 2002).
- Prioritize their process over their products (Dewey, 1934).
- Hold themselves and others accountable for the things they say and do (Clements & Wachowiak, 2010; Brunson, 2002).
- Make their learning relevant to their own lives with help from their peers and teachers (Bolin & Blandy, 2003; Acuff, 2013).
- Turn the classroom inside out; bring what they are learning home and out into the community (Bequette, 2007; Willis, 2002).

CONCLUSIONS & RECCOMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The best practices proposed on the previous pages and the unit plans attached as appendices are immediately utilizable in classrooms nationally and internationally. This document can become a resource for arts educators who are concerned about the conflicts they see in their classrooms, are sensitive to the problems associated with typical multicultural art lessons and interested in implementing new strategies or a new framework into their teaching.

There is a range of ways that this research could be extended in the future. For one, interesting parallels between informal and formal education practices emerged which could be drawn out and expanded on. Informal and formal education inherently inform each other, and by comparing and contrasting the benefits of implementing more extensive multicultural education in both settings could redefine the boundaries around each. That is, there are certainly ways in which local community organizations can aid in student learning experiences inside and outside the classroom. Research outlining best practices in community organizations connecting students with experts and authentic artifacts and materials on a regular basis, rather than only for certain projects, would prove very helpful for teachers to ensure sustainable multicultural art education in their classrooms. Students, teachers and families would benefit from this information.

In addition, future research focused on teacher professional development would be essential to understanding how CRS integration into multicultural art education is best implemented and supported in the school environment. How is a professional development workshop to introduce teachers to CRS and practices in multicultural art education best structured? Who needs to be involved in planning and evaluating those workshops? In addition, research directed at the change in attitude and behavior of students and/or changes in the classroom community after a year with integrated CRS and multicultural education would be a

fascinating follow up to this study. The same research might also study the ways in which the skills students gain from CRS seep into other subject areas or learning experiences at various grade levels.

Finally, this paper calls for future research to define a new approach to multicultural art education consistent with 21st century skills, Studio Habits of Mind, standards currently adopted by schools and consistent with the always changing student demographics of a school community.

UNIT PLANS

UNIT PLAN 1: Engaging Life & Death

Grade: 8-9 or grade 11

Class: Studio Art

Time Commitment: At least 8 (45-minute) class periods. Best to leave 2 weeks of class time.

Suggested time of year: October

Materials (not inclusive and dependent on student interests):

- Cameras (digital and video) that can be checked out
- Computers for internet research
- Butcher paper
- Drawing utensils
- Recycled Clay
- Paper mache supplies
- Assorted colorful recycled materials
- Large circular objects that can be traced
- Quality books & online resources
- If possible, borrowed artifacts (old and new) for students to touch and explore relevant to content
- Example projects from previous years
- Videos of celebrations taking place

Unit Summary:

- In this unit, through collaborative research, writing, presenting, discussion, and visual art production, students will take a deeper, more comprehensive look at the various ways cultural groups around the world understand death and celebrate their departed loved ones.

Standards:

Please note: It is likely that this unit plan will help students meet the following standards. However, depending on the class' interests and the way the unit is incorporated among other lessons, students may meet a wide range of other standards. Though I have worked to align the three unit plans with a range of standard types, each teacher will have to reconsider what standards are applicable for their classrooms.

CCSS: English Language Arts: Grade 8:

8.W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey ideas, concepts and information through the selection, organization and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS: History/Social Studies: Grade 8:

6-8.WHST.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

NCAS: Visual Arts: Grade 8:

VA:Pr5.1.8a: Collaboratively prepare and present selected theme-based artwork for display and formulate exhibition narratives for the viewer

Unit Objectives:

1. Through factual research, students make observations and draw conclusions about how people in different cultures around the world understand and respond to the death and departure of their loved ones.
2. Students think creatively and demonstrate critical thinking skills based on written/visual work and in-class collaborations
3. Students increase their discussion and negotiation skills
4. Students demonstrate understanding of cultural appropriation and how it differs from cultural appreciation.

Example Class Pact:

As students and teacher(s), we promise that as we research, create and discuss this unit we will be careful to not:

- Homogenize racial or ethnic groups into one
- Let us or our classmates make undefended assumptions that perpetuate bias
- Ignore the value of the art we see- if we can't see it, we'll look a little closer
- Mix up the past and present when discussing cultural groups
- Assign characteristics to an entire culture or people based on an individual
- Paint a culture as 'exotic' or 'primitive' but instead recognize their uniqueness
- Minimize the contributions of cultural groups to the rest of the world

(As adapted in part from Clements & Wachowiak, 2010, p 81).

Guiding Questions:

- For those cultures that celebrate/commemorate the lives of their departed loved ones, how do celebrations or associated activities compare and contrast?
- Under what circumstances is it acceptable to "appropriate" artifacts or activities from a culture not your own?

Teacher Duties:

1. Seek and confirm with local community members (youth and/or adults) who have personal experience celebrating their departed loved ones in ways that many students may not have personal experience with. For example, teachers may seek someone who celebrates Dia de los

Muertos and can explain their experience with the holiday. This expert may even lead students in a short hands-on activity associated with the holiday.

2. Seek and confirm showcase opportunity for student work to be shown. For example, Eugene teachers could see if Maude Kerns Art Center will reserve a space for artwork made by students and allow an opening reception.

Overview & Structure:

Part 1: Researching

Day 1:

- Teacher gives project overview and discusses **Class Pact** in detail and through role-play.
- Teacher gives historical context to major cultural groups or peoples who celebrate their departed loved ones in varying ways. Teacher shows associated artwork as possible.
- Class is divided into groups of 3-4 students
- Groups should choose a culture/holiday they are unfamiliar with to study. (Examples: Celtic festival of the dead (Samhain), The Festival of Lanterns (the Obon) in Japan, the P'chum Ben at the Pagoda in Cambodia, ancient Egyptians and their funeral rituals, etc.)

Research Components:

Day 2:

- Group Computer & Library Research. Teacher supplies books of artworks, videos and artifacts as possible.
- Students should write findings as short paragraphs to each of these questions:
 1. What happens when a person dies in this culture? Is there anything comparable to a funeral?
 2. Who is involved with planning these “celebrations of life” or funerals?
 3. Are the departed celebrated just this one time or regularly?
 4. Are there any letters we can find or artwork (primary sources) as evidence?
 5. What is ‘cultural appropriation’? How does it come into play here? (*This question may need extra guidance from teachers*).
 6. What kinds of objects are associated with death or dying in this culture? Can you find any of them in stores today? How do you think people from those cultural groups would feel about that?

Day 3:

- Students complete research and share findings briefly with class, answering the following questions orally:
 1. What more do you need to know to finish answering these questions?
 2. Who or what could help us find out more information?

Part 2: Learning from Others**Day 4** (45 min class period)

- Teacher invites in outside ‘expert’ to share about their experience as part of a cultural group that celebrates the departed in a unique way. It is best if the expert can also teach students a short activity. Make sure to invite this visitor to the final showcase of art. (Note: if physical visitor is not available, this is a good time to watch a video or do a Skype interview).

Part 3: Creating**Days 5-10** (5 45-minute class periods).**Objective:**

As a group, students decide how to make one collaborative or several small pieces which depict the uniqueness of the cultural group they have been researching. They should ask themselves:

- What do you want to teach others about these celebrations or rituals?
- How do you relate your own experiences about death, dying and cultural celebrations to those you have researched?
- What is similar or different?

The final project can be a drawing, painting, sculpture or video (or combination of these).

Day 5:

1. Students should work independently in their sketchbooks to sketch ideas for final project (20-30 minutes) and then come back together as a group.
2. Each student shares the ideas they came up with, uninterrupted, beginning with statements such as “I feel we should... because...” Or “I am very interested in ... And it we could express it by ...” (5 minutes/ student).

Day 6:

- Cover worktables with butcher paper or give student groups white boards or chalkboards.
- As a group, students should briefly revisit preliminary project ideas and make notes on the paper, drawing lines between connecting ideas or brainstorming what each other agrees on. If students feel stuck, the following can be used.

Possible Beginning Prompt:

- Make a Venn Diagram with two circles. One of the circles can represent what they know about the way they and their group members’ families deal with life, death and celebrations and what they have learned about another culture’s rituals. After filling as much information

in as they can, circle the 3 things they and their group find most compelling and brainstorm what they could make.

Day 6 Continued....

- Decide as a group if they are ready to make a decision. They should note if the decision was one of *collaboration, compromise, accommodation or avoidance*. Teacher gives short lesson on what those mean and why they are important.
- If group still doesn't agree on a common idea, then they should go around again, each individual speaking uninterrupted, to propose a possible solution.
- Begin as a group or individually as agreed upon. Teacher intervenes to facilitate collaboration if there is struggle. See below for intervention strategies.

Day 7:

- Create work. Meet as a group at the end of class to evaluate progress and make recommendations.

Day 8:

- Continue to create work.

Days 9-10:

- Finish individual and/or collaborative projects and discuss their installation in acquired community space. Help install work and host an opening reception, sharing about experiences and process.
- **Individual and group evaluation:** (anonymous questionnaire filled out by each student and turned in the teacher)
 - Is the final project what you had imagined?
 - What would you like to have changed?
 - What do you feel could help your group work together better in the future?
 - What could you do better in the future to be a better group member?

Extension: [See this extension for Unit Plans 2 & 3]

In a unit such as this, it is possible that a student will make a derogatory comment regarding another culture. The Class Pact is set in place and gone over thoroughly to set expectations for behavior, but the stirs up potentially sensitive material, and it is critical that all students feel respected, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

Example: One student in class celebrates Dia de los Muertos with his/her family. She/he overhears another group state that it is a “dark/depressing/creepy” holiday. Or, maybe it’s the opposite- that the

student who celebrates the holiday tells the ones researching “they are doing it wrong” or are “being racist”.

Intervention strategies:

- Have a “break” word, and use it.
- Let each student explain fully how they are feeling, uninterrupted, before any other words are exchanged
- See if students can find any commonalities (there will be at least 1) and continue work from there
- If they are having trouble working from there, give them individual time to make solution drawings to share with each other
- If a solution cannot be reached, allow students to go ahead with individual projects and revisit issue in individual evaluations at the end. At the end, have a class discussion about the types of problems and solutions experienced among students.
- Collaboration is not always possible and sometimes compromise isn’t best. We can all learn from the way we work with other.

Class 9-10:

Finish individual and/or collaborative projects and discuss their installation in acquired community space. Make sure students help with the install and host an opening reception for parents and families where students share about their experiences and process.

UNIT PLAN 2: Stories & Sustainability

Grade: 11

Class: Studio Art

Time Commitment: At least 8 (45-minute) class periods. Best to leave 2 weeks of class time.

Suggested time of year: Fall or Spring

Unit Summary:

- This unit transforms traditional Native American Art & history into a full-bodied experience in storytelling and environmental stewardship. Through collaborative research, writing, presenting, discussion, and visual art production, students will take a deeper, more comprehensive look at the various ways indigenous groups in the United States past and present have contributed to environmental sustainability efforts.

Materials (not inclusive and dependent on student interests):

- Cameras (digital and video) that can be checked out
- Computers for internet research
- Butcher paper
- Drawing utensils
- Large circular objects that can be traced
- Quality books & online resources on Native peoples and agriculture
- If possible, borrowed artifacts (old and new) for students to touch and explore from local museums
- Example 'manuals'
- Example art dealing with the environment by Native and other artists

Standards:

Civics & Government:

Oregon State Standard: 7: Analyze the history, culture, tribal sovereignty and historical and current issues of the American Indian

Science:

Oregon State Standard: 20: Analyze the impact on physical and human systems of resource development, use, and management and evaluate the issues of sustainability.

Language arts:

CCSS: Writing: Standard 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

National Visual Arts Standards: 9-12:

Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

Unit Objectives:

1. Critically examine contemporary Native North American cultures and associated stereotypes
2. Make connections to how past and present Native American practices in agriculture and material use are related to current sustainable practices
3. By seeking the knowledge of experts and engaging the local community, become acquainted with local Native American literature, artwork and history

Class Pact:

As students and teacher(s), we promise that as we research, create and discuss this unit we will be careful to not:

- Homogenize racial or ethnic groups into one
 - Let us or our classmates make undefended assumptions that perpetuate bias
 - Ignore the value of the art we see- if we can't see it, we'll look a little closer
 - Mix up the past and present when discussing cultural groups
 - Assign characteristics to an entire culture or people based on an individual
 - Paint a culture as 'exotic' or 'primitive' but instead recognize their uniqueness
 - Minimize the contributions of cultural groups to the rest of the world
- (As adapted in part from Clements & Wachowiak, 2010, p 81).*

Big questions:

- What is environmental stewardship and what can we learn about it through investigating Native American art and culture, past and present?
- When dealing with Native American art, artifacts, stories and symbols, where do we find cultural appropriation? In what ways is it negative and how can we express cultural appreciation instead of appropriation?
- How are cycles (physical or metaphorical) integral in Native American stories, art, and the natural environment?

Guiding Questions:

- What do you do that makes you a steward for your environment?
- What are you learning that changes the way you see plants, animals and the natural landscape?
- How can you share these findings with others through making art?

Teacher Duties:

1. Locate and invite a local expert to class to share their experience with agriculture and how art and food are often intertwined. If in-person guest speaker is not available, try to coordinate a Skype interview or phone call.
2. Support students in their collaborations with experts during their research, whether in person, or via Skype or phone
3. Seek and confirm showcase opportunity for students' finished work. For example, Eugene, Oregon teachers could see if the Museum of Natural and Cultural History or the Native American Longhouse would reserve a temporary space for artwork made by students or host an unveiling event for students to present and incite feedback from experts, students and community members.
4. Locate and provide quality books, objects, and resources for research. Students should learn research techniques but not be spending their limited research days trying to find quality information.

Overview & Structure:**Part 1: Researching****Day 1:**

- Teacher gives project overview and discusses **Class Pact** in detail and through role-play.
- **Project Overview:**
- Over 60% of the foods we use today were cultivated and developed first by Native Americans (avocado, beans, berries, chilies, chocolate, agave, corn, vanilla, tomato, potato, etc.). This, along with many important Native American stories and arts associated with food, growth and nourishment are often misinterpreted or completely left out of environmental education.
- Students will select one or two foods or food groups from the “60% list” and research the relation of that food to Native groups. Using the overall theme of “cycles,” each group will artistically represent these food(s) – and ultimately tell the story about their transformation over time- physically and/or metaphorically.
- Students will accompany their art products with a written manual about what they’ve learned that will help others grow this food sustainably, and where they can find out more information.
- **Teacher spearheads preliminary discussion about:**
 1. Native American contributions to modern day agriculture
 2. Importance of cycles and the cyclical nature of the human life, animal lives, and natural lives, both physically and spiritually to many Native American groups
 3. Introduction of Native American art (photos and objects) associated with these cycles and/or conservation, stewardship & agriculture

4. Introduction to common misconceptions about Native Americans past and present- careful not to paint Native Americans as quintessential stewards of the land but give respect where it is due

Research Component:

Day 2-3:

- Class is divided into groups of 3-4 students
- Students will select one or two foods or food groups and research the relation to Native groups before brainstorming the resulting written and artistic product.
- Each group will research and answer the following questions to the best of their ability:
 1. Which Native groups are associated with the development of your chosen foods? Are any of them local to you?
 2. Describe the cycle of this food, literally and metaphorically. This may be its literal seed to fruit cycle, and the way it has transformed historically, or perhaps a narrative about it's transformation in unison with one or more Native groups.
 3. What Native American stories and art can be found representing this food? In what ways? (Students should find 5-6 pieces- at least 2 artworks and 2 stories. This question may require extra guidance from teachers).
 4. What impact do these foods have on farming and agriculture today? Has there been much change? How reliant are people today on this food?

Before leaving, student groups should decide how to continue research individually as homework to finish the following day.

Day 3:

- Students continue and complete research and share findings briefly with class. As a group, they should also respond to the following questions.
 1. Are there any local experts who we/you can reach out to find out more information?

Part 2: Bring in the Experts

Day 4 (45 min class period)

- Teacher invites in outside expert to share about their experience as part of a Native American group and if there are any foods particularly important to the livelihood of that group, how they understand sustainable farming, how the environment and art making intersects in their experience and/or what they would like students to understand about them & their history. Hopefully, this expert is able to conduct a short lesson with students dealing with a traditional art form or environmental stewardship. Make sure the expert feels welcome to bring any art or story they would like to share. It may be more meaningful or appropriate for the class to meet this expert off-site.
- *Example:* Perhaps the expert is interested helping students plant camas bulbs in Howard Buford Recreation Area, while sharing the history of camas in the Willamette Valley. Or, perhaps they would like to instruct students in basket weaving so that students can use baskets for collecting

foods in the spring and summer months. For a lesson dealing with stewardship, it is best that students actually take part in being stewards.

Part 3: Creating

Day 5 - 9 ((4) 45-minute class periods).

Objective:

As a group, students decide how to make one collaborative or several small pieces which depict the cyclical nature of the foods and associated arts they have been researching. They should ask themselves:

- How do you want to teach others about your research? What do others need to know?
- How do you relate your own experiences with growing/consuming food, with what you've learned? How has your thinking changed?

The final project may be a drawing, painting, sculpture, photo-montage, dramatic representation, or video (or combination of those).

Teacher should show a few related examples of statement environmental art and artists who deal with depicting natural cycles through different mediums.

Day 5:

3. Students should work independently in their sketchbooks to sketch ideas for final project (20-30 minutes) and then come back together as a group
4. Each student shares the ideas they came up with, uninterrupted, beginning with statements such as "I feel we should...because..." Or "I am very interested in ... And it we could express it by ..."
(5 minutes/ student)

Day 6:

- Cover worktables with butcher paper or give student groups white boards or chalkboards.
- As a group, students should briefly revisit preliminary project ideas and make notes on the paper, drawing lines between connecting ideas or brainstorming what each other agrees on.
- When students are prepared to start making decisions, teacher should give a short lesson on *compromise, collaboration, accommodation or avoidance* in decision-making and give examples.

Prompts to begin:

- Make a Venn diagram with two circles. One of the circles can represent the food(s) students are researching and the other Native American Art/cultural history. They should begin listing what they know about each until the conjoining circle begins to fill.

- Decide as a group if they are ready to make a decision. They should note and share if the decision was one of *compromise, accommodation or avoidance*.
- If group still doesn't agree on a common idea, then they should go around again, each individual speaking uninterrupted, to propose a possible solution.
- Begin as a group or individually as agreed upon. Teacher intervenes to facilitate collaboration if there is struggle. See below for intervention strategies.

Possible starting points:

- Take photos of that food as it is found locally
- Make realistic drawings of the food from seed to plant
- Map where this food is found locally & across the United States with explicit connections made artistically to native groups and art & history
- In whatever fashion is most appropriate, divide a large circle into pie pieces, and fill each piece with an artistic component of the "cycle" you're mapping
- Start by writing the manual and when inspired, move towards artistic production

Day 7:

- Create work. Meet as a group at the end of class to evaluate progress and make recommendations.

Day 8:

- Continue to create work. Begin work on written manual if needed. For weekend homework, try to finish project and decide how to delegate tasks so that manual is completed.

Days 9-10:

- Finish individual and/or collaborative projects and discuss their installation in acquired community space. Write out presentation. Help install work and host an opening reception, sharing about experiences and process. Write thank you notes to any local experts.
- Discuss individual and group evaluations without using names and practicing using "I feel..." language rather than pointed statements. Sharing difficulties and how they were overcome is a very important part of this process.
- **Individual and group evaluation:**
 - Is the final project what you had imagined?
 - What would you like to have changed?
 - What do you feel could help your group work together better in the future?
 - What could you do better in the future to be a better group member?

UNIT PLAN 3: Behind the Mask

Grade: 9

Class: Studio Art or World Cultures

Time Commitment: At least 9 (45-minute) class periods. Best to leave 2+ weeks of class time.

Suggested time of year: Spring

Unit Summary:

- This unit transforms the traditional mask-making unit into an exploration of cultural identity in relation to the use of masks in ceremonies and celebrations worldwide.

Materials:

- Cameras (digital and video) that can be checked out
- Computers for internet research
- Butcher paper
- Drawing utensils
- Clay
- Carve-able wood
- Paper maché
- Powdered paints to mix
- Paintbrushes
- Various sculpting supplies and additional decor
- Quality books & online resources on masks and masquerade
- If possible, borrowed mask artifacts (old and new) for students to touch and explore from local museums (or see on field trip)
- Example masks from past years
- Example personal reflections

Standards Met:

Social Sciences:

Oregon State Standard: 58: Gather, analyze, use, and document information from various sources, distinguishing facts, opinions, inferences, biases, stereotypes, and persuasive appeals.

Arts:

CP 2: Explain the choices made in the creative process when combining ideas, techniques, and problem solving to produce one's work, and identify the impact that different choices might have made.

HC 2: Describe and distinguish works of art from different societies, time periods, and cultures, emphasizing their common and unique characteristics.

English Language Arts:

Oregon State Standard: Range of Writing: 10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

***Note:** This standard will likely be met in tandem with the development of the artistic process, that is, as students research, reflect and revise their masks, it should be noted in their reflection journals.

Unit Objectives:

1. Critically examine masks from several different cultures online and in person
2. Learn how mask making (past and present) influences status, value, identity and ceremony in cultural groups
3. By seeking the knowledge of “experts” and engaging with the local community, become acquainted with local/regional mask making techniques and cultivate some skill in techniques useful to group project

Class Pact:

- As students and teacher(s), we promise that as we research, create and discuss this unit we will be careful to not:
- Homogenize racial or ethnic groups into one
- Let us or our classmates make undefended assumptions that perpetuate bias
- Ignore the value of the art we see- if we can’t see it, we’ll look a little closer
- Mix up the past and present when discussing cultural groups
- Assign characteristics to an entire culture or people based on an individual
- Paint a culture as ‘exotic’ or ‘primitive’ but instead recognize their uniqueness
- Minimize the contributions of cultural groups to the rest of the world
(*As adapted in part from Clements & Wachowiak, 2010, p 81*).

Guiding questions:

- How do masks illustrate power structures, practices of exclusion and inclusion and concepts of privilege?
- What styles, symbols and associated values can you find by examining masks? Where is there overlap?
- What more information do you need to answer the above questions?

- When have you worn a mask in your life, literally or figuratively speaking?

Teacher Duties:

1. Locate and invite a local expert to class (either via Skype or in-person) to share their experience with making and/or wearing masks. This expert should identify as part of a cultural group to which mask making is important and be able to share about technique and history.
2. Support students in their collaborations with experts during their research, whether in person, or via Skype or phone.
3. Provide mask artifacts by borrowing them from local museums or taking students on a field trip.
4. Seek and confirm showcase opportunity for students' finished work. Masks should be put on a live auction or in an art show and families should be invited. Students should decide how to prepare and install their own artwork.
5. Locate and provide quality books, objects, and resources for research.

Overview & Structure:**Part 1: Researching****Day 1:**

- Teacher discusses **Class Pact** in detail and through role-play.
- *Masks are not a “thing of the past”. We wear them on the inside and the outside. Masks are important to ceremonies and celebrations of many cultural groups around the world.*
- Give overview of mask art history. (Example: Korean masks, other Asian masks, African masks, Alaskan masks, Greco-Roman masks, etc.)
- Compare and contrast styles with students. Incorporate discussion surrounding the elements of art. Compare and contrast functionality and form with concrete examples.
- Give project overview to students.
- Students will accompany their art products with a personal reflection.
- **Teacher spearheads preliminary discussion about:**
- Common misconceptions about masks being from primitive cultures and the “I understand one, I understand them all” mindset
- Different techniques and materials used for inspiration

Research Component:**Day 2-3:**

- Class is divided into groups of 3-4 students
- Each student group will be given a mask from last year's class to re-contextualize or transform. First, they should take a photo of it for reference. They may choose to transform it by making it resemble that of a mask from one of the recently studied cultures. They may choose to completely deconstruct and reconstruct the mask to represent one of the students in the group or a public figure. This is an opportunity to research mask-making techniques, explore materials and gain inspiration for the next step of the unit.
- Each group will research and answer the following questions to the best of their ability:
 1. Do any cultural groups local to you make masks for celebration or ceremony?
 2. In what ways do masks express meaning?
 3. How do you understand mask as part of a costume? What is costume?
- Students begin mask transformation.

Day 4:

- Students continue mask transformation
- At the end of class, students share photo of initial mask and transformed mask
- 1-3 students explain process while remaining student wears mask. (Movement or dancing may be very appropriate, depending on mask's purpose and transformation).
- Teacher facilitates brief student critique.
- Student who wore the mask reflects on experience being critiqued while wearing a mask. This reflection will be shared with small group and incorporated into final reflection.

Part 2: Bring in the Experts**Day 4 (45 min class period)**

- Teacher invites in an outside expert to share about their experience as part of a cultural group that makes, wears or uses masks in some way. Expert should share, if possible, about materials and techniques used in making masks. Students should be able to ask questions about what is most and least difficult about mask making and wearing.
- If there are any associated videos of dancing, theatre or movement while wearing masks, this is a good day for those to be shown.
- Class debrief. What are the take a-ways? What questions remain?

Part 3: Creating**Day 5 - 9 ((4) 45-minute class periods).****Objective:**

- Although they will work in groups, the next part of the unit is a largely individual project. Each student will create *at least two* more masks – one, representing a public figure (a commentary on a politician, celebrity, or community member) and another, representing themselves (the face they feel they wear, the face they wish they wore, or depicting something that others may not know about them) in the style they researched from one culture. Working in a group will help students share and refine ideas throughout the process.
- All finished masks will be installed in an art show or put out at a family night for silent auction to raise funds for the school's art program.
- At least one of each student's masks must be donated to the art program to be transformed in future years.
- Students should write daily in a journal, reflecting on the process of choosing the mask subjects, how the mask making is going, how their group is helping them refine ideas and what they hope to accomplish during the next class. The last 10 minutes of class should be allotted for writing time.

Day 5 (continued):

- Students should work independently in their sketchbooks to sketch ideas for final projects (20 minutes) and then come back together as a group with preliminary ideas.
- Each student shares the ideas they came up with, uninterrupted, beginning with statements such as "I feel..." Or "I am very interested in ...I could express it by ..." (5 minutes/ student)
- Once each student has shared, each student should give brief feedback to each other student in his or her groups. *Example:* "I hear that representing (x) is important to you. May I suggest that you try (x) material, which I've seen can be very helpful in getting that emotion across."

Day 6:

- Cover worktables with butcher paper or give student groups white boards or chalkboards.
- As a group, students should briefly revisit preliminary mask ideas and make notes on the paper, drawing lines between connecting ideas or brainstorming what each other agrees on. The elements of art should be considered: *color, form, line, shape, space, texture and value*. Students should make sketches of each mask in their reflection journals.
- Materials such as clay, wood, carving utensils, paper Mache and plaster of Paris should be provided for students to begin constructing the base of their masks.

Prompts to begin:

- Make a Venn diagram with two+ circles. One of the circles can represent masks from one cultural group the other masks from a different group. They should begin listing what they know about each until the conjoining circle(s) begin to fill.

- Is there a public figure you agree with or disagree with? How can a mask create a narrative or commentary on something that public figure believes in or does not believe in?
- What examples of masks can you find which express the values you care about? How did the artist choose materials, style, color, etc.?
- Reverse: Take what ideas you currently have for your mask and sketch the exact opposite: for example, if the student is thinking of making a mask of a joyful Ellen DeGeneres, they could sketch a mask of a grumpy Bill O'Reilly and see what new ideas emerge.
- Write in reflection journal.

Day 7:

- Continue to create masks. Meet as a group at the end of class to evaluate progress and make recommendations.

Day 8:

- Continue to work on mask. For weekend homework, finish at least one mask and make plan for completing second mask in allotted time. Continue to write in journal about progress.

Days 9-11:

- Finish mask projects and discuss their installation in acquired space. Invite local experts and any groups who might be interested. Students should write out presentations to give to those who attend.
- Students should be able to clearly explain to visitors and in reflection journals the reasons for which they chose the colors, materials and styles they did for their masks, and relate their choices to masks they studied from cultures around the world. How are they similar? How are they different?
- Students should help install work and host an opening reception, sharing about experiences and process.
- Write thank you notes to any local experts.
- Each student must choose which mask to donate to the art program.
- Students should finish journals to turn in. They may have the weekend to finish.
- Fill out individual and group evaluation. Discuss the evaluations without using names and practicing using "I feel..." language rather than pointed statements. Sharing difficulties and how they were overcome is a very important part of this process.
- **Individual and group evaluation:**
 - Are the final masks what you had imagined?
 - What worked well?

- What would you like to have changed?
- Concerning group work: what do you feel could have been more helpful to you in this process?
- What could you do better in the future to be a better group member?

Journals should include:

- Track progress from beginning group mask transformation until installation.
- Include 3+ pages about their experiences wearing their masks, and how the process has changed their perception on masks from other cultures.

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