

Middle School Medley: **Connecting Art, Families, and Community**

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This presentation will highlight various art projects and activities that foster connections between middle school students, their parents, the community at large and other curricular areas.

Taking Georgia into the Community

Students drew contour line drawings of a variety of flowers and then created an effective composition on thin 12"x16" paper demonstrating the following requirements:

- Overlapping
- Filling 2/3rds of the space with flowers
- "Activated Edges" – having something go off the edge of the page
- Multiple views of the flower (buds, full view, side view, etc.)
- Composition is then transferred to water color paper using gray transfer paper.



Concepts:

- Drawing from life
- Composition
- Transfer technique
- Watercolor techniques
- Focus on Georgia O'Keefe

Science connections:

- Analyzing flowers
- Identifying flowers

Community Connections:

- Senior Visit
- Arboretum

Students then learned a variety of water color techniques and then were to apply at least two techniques within their painting.

Community Connection: Senior citizens at a local senior living facility were invited "back to school" for a lesson in art. A select group of interested middle school students were partnered with the seniors and taught them the lesson they had just learned in school. Seniors were given the chance to draw flowers, paint them in and to receive a gift from their middle school partner. Refreshments were provided. This event was both meaningful for young and old alike.

Strive for 5

Just as we are encouraged to eat five fruits and vegetables daily, students were asked to draw a variety of fruits and vegetables and incorporate at least five value techniques into their design. Fruits/vegetables were colored in with a layer of watercolor marker over which color pencil value was applied for a realistic appearance. A strong black/white graphic design was created for the background into which various patterns were applied using a fine line marker.



Media: marker, colored pencil, extra fine permanent marker

Family and Community Connection:

Arrangements were made with a local supermarket to exhibit a display of student work. Generously provided was a large display area in the front vestibule complete with a beautiful arrangement of local produce, flowers and a wonderful sign “Locally Grown Artists.” Parents and students were invited to the supermarket for the exhibit’s opening and were provided with cloth shopping bags and gift cards for use in the store. The school principal, store manager and produce manager joined me in comments congratulating students and parents.

Tips: When asking for support from local establishments, go in with a plan, an example of student work, dimensions of space needed and a list of questions. While expressing appreciation for the opportunity to partner with a valuable community asset such as a local store, ask if the store would be willing to provide a discount or other “perk” to make this event even more memorable for the students and their families. This builds community support for the school and customer support for the store.

Ask if it would be alright to alert the local media for a bit of good public relations.



Cross Curricula Connection: Alert your Family and Consumer Science teacher to this unit and suggest that, if possible, any cooking lessons make use of fruits and vegetables. Calorie and nutritional information can be calculated.

Sweet Treats

With the plethora of cooking shows on TV, this project is easy to find inspiration for! Ace of Cakes, DC Cupcakes, cooking magazines and the artwork of artist, Wayne Thiebaud offer plenty of opportunities for students to decide how to apply the basic building techniques of coil, pinch and slab as they construct a delicious looking dessert good enough to eat. Bakery treats needed to be served on a dish or in a bowl, and the construction and glazing needed to demonstrate excellent craftsmanship. Low fire clay (Cone 05-06) and Stoke 'n Coat glazes were used for this project.



Community Connection:

A local bakery within walking distance of our school in the small village of Webster, NY, agreed to allow us to display our desserts within the front window of the shop and also in the small café within the bakery for a week. A school display complete with café table advertised the bakery tie-in. A walking field trip to the bakery to see the display and enjoy a bakery treat was planned during the time students had class. (We had an hour to walk, view, eat and get back to school.) Since more than one class did this project, the bakery was kind enough to host two classes at two different times during the day. The owner/ baker of the shop agreed to make extra desserts that day so students could purchase something to eat. Additionally, parents were invited back with their child on their own time to see the display. A group photo was taken outside the bakery providing an opportunity to promote student learning, local business and pride in a job well done. Photo appeared in the local paper.



Tips: Make sure all arrangements are clear and understood between you and the local business; get field trip permission forms filled out and check school regulations for student/teacher ratio on field trips, inviting parents to chaperone; set high expectations for student behavior when they travel to and visit any establishment.

Student – Parent Dinner and Art Night

So far I've yet to come up with a more creative name for this event which I've held for the past three years, but regardless, this event continues to be one of my favorite activities of the school year.

Middle School is often a time when parents' involvement in school changes from one of participant to observer. Whereas elementary parents might have been room parents or heavily involved in events sponsored by the parent-teacher organization,

Middle school parents' involvement understandably tends to move more to the sidelines, literally and figuratively. Knowing that their child is developing and becoming more independent, involvement in the classroom is rare. Rather, parents tend to show their support by attending sporting events, concerts and curriculum night, becoming more of an observer of what their child does rather than a participant with their child. My parent-student dinner and art night gives parents and students a chance to create art together and gives parents a chance to work in the same classroom their child does in class.

Registration: I can host up to 50 people in my classroom. I hold the event from 5-7:30pm on the second Thursday of November. A sign up form is in the school newsletter and on my website. Announcements are also made on the morning TV show.



The evening begins with a simple dinner of pizza, salad, dessert and family photos



Dinner: The evening starts with a simple dinner of pizza, salad, cookies, apples and bottle water set up buffet style in the hallway. My principal pays for pizza; I pay for everything else dinner related (which I don't mind since I enjoy this type of thing.) Art tables are set with construction paper placemats and name tags are placed for participants to fill out. Dinner lasts 30 minutes.

Activity: Each year it is different. Consider planning a “make and take” activity, something interesting that can be completed in an hour or two. Examples of my activities are below.

Learning: I do present a short lesson on a specific technique or art concept so students and parents can reinforce that learning as they work on the project. Short PowerPoint presentations and demonstrations are held, and exemplars are available for viewing.

Make it fun!: Keeping things light is important, for everyone has already had a long day at work or school. Family portraits and art work are photographed throughout the evening and a group photo is taken at the end. I compile all photos and create a music video using ANIMOTO (free for teachers) which I send to all families and post on the morning announcements for the rest of the school to see.

Invite school personnel: Consider inviting your school principal and other administrators, supervisors or school board members to stop by and /or join in! Alert your district PR person to cover this event to promote family involvement and advocate for the art program.

Below: Student/Parent Projects: Painting, Aluminum Relief Designs (for Thanksgiving), Modular Origami table (group project), Origami wreath



Other Connections

- **Poetic Paintings** – Celebrate National Poetry Month in April with a display of illustrated poems. Students learn calligraphy and write a Haiku poem to go along with their painting. Have a display in your public library and invite parents and community members to the exhibit. Have a poetry reading too!
- **Galleria Mia** (as seen in the March issue of School Arts Magazine.) Have students explore (either virtually or in person) local, state and national museums. Then have them design the interior of a gallery using perspective drawing skills. If time permits, take your students on a field trip to an art museum or gallery, or give extra credit for family outings to such places.

