Humor and Collaboration in the High School Art Studio
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A series of workshops that originated from my Graduate Thesis:

*Deleuze and Humor: Considerations for the High School Art Curriculum*
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Graduate Thesis Research Question:

*Will introducing humor, through the exploration of higher-level metacognitive thinking, into high school art experiences facilitate classroom camaraderie and an environment where students feel safe to explore and take risks?*

Conclusions:

1. Laughter seemed to be a strong unifier.
2. Once students felt safe to laugh, and crack jokes, they started to develop strong ties to their classmates and teacher.
3. Then, they exhibited a strong desire to take more risks in their work.
4. Participants responded positively to unstructured, inquiry-based art-making.
5. End-of-term portfolios displayed increased risk-taking.

In order to add depth to their AP Concentration ideas, a co-worker and I saw the need to develop relationships. We started to host weekly, non-graded, creative workshops during lunch to encourage relationships and bonding through humor and laughter. These activities are not meant to be portfolio pieces, only quick and fun exercises to build relationships.

How have these workshops impacted the group as a whole?

1. The students come every Friday!
2. Students that probably wouldn’t have developed friendships are close, inside and outside the art studio.
3. More and more often, their responses to the prompts tend to represent inside jokes.
4. They are respectful and supportive of each other.
5. Since they feel safe in the space and with the other students, they are digging into more meaningful concentration ideas. Such as:
   1. Sexual orientation
   2. Effects of technology on family relationships
   3. Exploitation of art and art history
   4. Personal and public reaction to violence in our society
   5. Obsession with stereotypical beauty through exploration of self
Some ideas for Activities follow:
*Asking student volunteers to share their end-results encourages laughter and relationship building. Shy students may even volunteer themselves after they start to feel safe and comfortable.

1. Collaborative Notecard Consequences: Prepare a stack of notecards, numbering each with numbers 1-11 (How many sets will depend on how many students you expect). Pass out the instruction sheet and ask students to respond on the back of each card. Collect all the cards and mix up the sets (students like to help with this step). Then ask each student to read aloud a new “consequence poem”.

2. Edward Monkton Box Messages: show a copy of one of Edward Monkton's books. Provide paper and pens. Students draw their own boxes and caption their doodles.

3. DE motivators: Print out a bunch of cliché landscape photographs. Ask the students to add satirical messages.

4. Absurd Warning Labels: Post funny warning signs (internet image search) as students enter the room. Provide blank templates and markers so they can make their own.

5. Revised Coloring Pages: Provide children's coloring book pages (kittens, puppies… ) and let kids ADD to the drawings before coloring them in.

6. College Rejection Letter Re-writes: Provide a college rejection letter template for students to “re-write”. Use this exercise in December as seniors are hearing back from their early-decision applications. Ask the students to read their letters aloud.

7. Portrait Collages: Provide a black and white picture of a popular teacher. Provide collage materials for the students to add hats, glasses, shirt collars...

8. Christmas Song-Rewrites: Provide copies of common holiday songs. Ask the students to use the format but plug in new words that say something new. Example: One of my AP students wrote an “Ode to his art teacher “(ME) using the 12 Days of Christmas to vent about his 12 AP Concentration pieces.

9. College Pamphlet Captions: Collect college pamphlets from the college counseling office (the students also receive 100’s in the mail). Have the students pull out images and add captions; encourage sarcasm.