

Teaching Art to Children in Crisis

A Research Presentation at the NAEA 2012 Convention, New York

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4:30 – 4:55 pm

Hilton Concourse C Lower Level

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Description: Learn about research findings of an art program in a homeless shelter. Recommendations for teaching children in crisis will be provided and suggested terminology for teaching art in informal contexts.

This paper describes qualitative research on implementation of an art program for children residing in a homeless shelter. Using a social-cultural lens and a framework of resilience theory, teacher-researchers collaborated on interdisciplinary community art for children residing in a family emergency shelter. This collaborative research involved university and community and bridged theory to practice by providing opportunities that empower individuals. Data included field notes, artwork, analytical notes, and interviews with mothers and shelter staff. New media technologies facilitated ongoing dialog, reflection, and development of best practices. Findings indicate the importance of cultural context for children living in crisis, and suggest that art programs for children who are homeless can benefit community and enhance teacher preparation by increasing knowledge about context. Successes and challenges shared, recommendations to guide educators teaching children in crisis are provided, as well as appropriate terminology for teaching art in informal learning contexts.

Heise, D. & MacGillivray, L (2011). Implementing an Art Program for Children in a Homeless Shelter. *Studies in Art Education*, 52(4), 323-336.

School-based programs	Informal settings
Curriculum	Program
Lesson	Activity/Exploration
Class	Session
Students	Children
Teacher	Facilitator
Grades	Successes
Classroom	Multipurpose room
Product	Artwork

Figure 3. Terminology for school-based programs and informal learning settings.

The following list may guide educators teaching in community settings:

1. Meet regularly before and during implementation to discuss process and future plans.
2. Analyze the setting and storage options. Consider the ramification of how the space is used at other times.
3. Discuss the roles, resources, and goals of all persons involved. Do not assume a shared perspective.
4. Expect last-minute changes in schedules and locations.
5. Attend to the specific context: Do not assume the process and outcomes of activities based upon work with other populations or in other settings.
6. Facilitate a caring environment with active listening.
7. Consider the living situation of participants and create culturally responsive curriculum.
8. Analyze the relationship between your goals for the program and your language, and adjust as necessary.

Figure 4. Recommendations for teaching in community settings.