

Writing and Critique: A Reflective Approach to Art

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Overview

The purpose of this curriculum is to combine the communication standard for writing with the art standard of Critical Response in order to make writing an integral part of high school art education. My goal is to make writing about art a desirable yet simplified task for students who normally question the validity of writing in art class. Strategies are described to foster a writing environment in an art course while treating writing as a creative art form.

This unit tells the story of how a writing curriculum unfolded with help from my students as I researched the most effective way to encourage students to write descriptive analysis about famous paintings, work by classmates, and their own visual work. A discipline-based art education is the desired result.

Rationale

The Standards

According to the National Art Education Association, “The Standards are intended to focus on the students learning, results from basic learning, not how art is to be taught” (*National Visual Arts Standards*). Their intent is to provide educational goals not a national curriculum.

The standards we are expected to facilitate as art teachers are **art production, art history, critical response, and aesthetics**. While the N.A.E.A. has established these expectations, referred to as standards and

also known as a Disciplined Based Art Education or D.B.A.E., it is up to the teacher to determine how to communicate these standards to their students.

“D.B.A.E. is not a curriculum.”

Elliot W. Eisner Learning In and Through Art
A Guide to Discipline-Based Art

Education

The Confusion

A new teacher could easily be discouraged by the litany of expectation that I list below, but I will attempt to offer a degree of clarity through my focus on the critique of visual work.

- Address a high quality visual art education in all schools expected by Congress and The United States Department of Education.
- Implement the Visual Art Standards.
- Write weekly lesson plans: The learner will transfer an image from paper to clay.
- Understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
- Make connections between the arts and other disciplines.
- Meet Content Standards: Reading Writing, Speaking and Listening
- Teach Art History: “.....analyzing the visual arts is like analyzing a poem.”
- Integrate Communication Standard 4: All students write for a variety of purposes including to narrate, inform, and persuade in all subject areas.
- Respond Critically: use vocabulary as related to art in terms of elements and principles.
- Deliver visually literate high school graduates from the art program.

- Continue education or lose certification.
- Keep updated on current trends in art, and keep up with advancements in technology.
- Communicate student progress to parents.
- Order supplies and stay within budget.

Still Want to Be an Art Teacher?

“Why do I feel lost?” “What am I to do first?” “How do I know if I am reaching the standards?” “Why won’t they tell me what to do?” “I thought art was supposed to be fun.” “I thought teaching art to children would be more fun.”

There is just too much to do for an educator, so much to keep track of and to organize. We have a classroom to keep clean, parents to telephone, and memos to sort through. We work long past the school day grading papers at home, we travel to far away places during our time off to discover fresh and creative ideas for art projects, and to eat up our free time even more we are expected to continue our education every five years in order to keep our certification.

It’s a wonder we have time for our families, our hobbies, physical fitness, or care for our homes. This perhaps explains the fact that a school teacher was forbidden to marry over one hundred years ago in this country. What have we gotten ourselves into?

Lucy McCormick Calkins also adds the question, how do we devote time to all of our students? She writes, “We cannot hold the details of one hundred and twenty lives in our minds all at once” (163). Students do expect us to know exactly what their individual needs are from the time they walk into the classroom just the way patients expect doctors to remember exactly what their symptoms were since their last visits. She also goes on to explain that there is simply not enough time in a class period to devote to each student (163). She is absolutely right. How do we give attention to twenty-five to thirty art students in a forty minute period with a five minute cleanup time?

Let’s not forget the unfamiliar student sent by another teacher who unexpectedly shows up in your classroom just in time to hear you state your objective. Forget your anticipatory set and maybe your behavior management crisis, this student wants you to drop everything you are doing with your own students to get a cupful of black paint to take back to an academic class.

“Interruption shatters the school day, making absorption in one’s work almost impossible,” according to Calkins (186).

With all the demands from our chosen careers how do we find the time to address the expectations from our school district, our state government, and the National Art Education Association? How do we get started on serving our students with a Disciplined-Based Art Education? There are some books available; however, it almost feels like we are handed the equipment, but we are not told the best way to work with it. We are not told about the risk of not teaching the information properly. It is trial and error for us.

Just imagine if you were interested in sky diving. You’re introduced to the pilot and you board the plane. A parachute is waiting for you inside. The plane takes off. You look around, and there is not another human being available for instructions not even a written manual on the proper way to wearing the parachute. It’s up to you to figure out how to jump.

With that in mind where is the guide to help write a curriculum on writing in a high school art classroom? “Where is the model I am to follow?” “Where is the D.B.A.E. textbook?” “Is there a college course on teaching the art standards?” They never told me that I had to teach writing when I was a student teacher. There is more to teaching art than when many of us got started. There is more to an art education than crayons and construction paper.

Rationale 2

Solving the Mystery

There is a reason they won’t tell us how to facilitate the standards. The objective is not to create a national curriculum. Not every school in this country operates the same way. Every student in every community does not learn the same way. Not all students are educated the same way within a school building. The educational background of my high school students varies. They arrive from different middle schools and even other high schools.

I have a very brilliant mature young lady in my Ceramics 2 class this year, and she hasn’t had an art class since she was in the sixth grade. She is a very productive student who is open to learning new concepts, and she is very serious about furthering her education. Unfortunately, as a senior she has never been exposed to the **Elements of Art** let alone the **Principles of Design**.

As a first year high school art teacher I really did not expect to teach the **Elements of Art** to seniors for the first time. We never know what kind of students will be passed on to us. My point is we must modify and adjust our

teaching sometimes from student to student, and from class to class. The N.A.E.A will not tell us how to teach our students.

While reviewing the art standards I realized we have been given a wonderful gift. The N.A.E.A has given each art teacher the power and the freedom to tune into our own creative genius to produce our art lesson plans.

Just as we allow our own students to communicate their own creative expression in the Visual Arts, the N.A.E.A. has set us free to facilitate the standards. Standard makers, at least where art is concerned, are not Marxist in nature. Creativity, individuality and divergent thinking are allowed to flourish within the teachers and the students.

In Growing Up Creative, Teresa M. Amabile explains that research has shown that control-oriented teachers produce lower levels of creativity in students (87). Her teaching philosophy is, "Teachers are resources not policemen," (137). The same idea shall be applied to the N.A.E.A. The organization is our resource.

Objective

The freedom to create my own art curriculum led me to explore the methods of teaching **Critical Response** to diverse high school art students while discovering the path to inspire these students to write. I will use my creativity to develop a

curriculum to teach this standard. The N.A.E.A. gave us four art standards to work with. It is up to those of us who are art educators to develop the lessons and get results.

While a student at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh I spent twenty-four intense months learning art production. In college as well as at A.I.P. art history became a new world for me. So far most of us have done a lot of planning and teaching in the category of Production and Performance. It is not hard to integrate Historical and Cultural context into working with Production. While I am not going to address Production, Art History, and Aesthetics, I will focus on Critique as a written response.

Strategies

So how are we going to investigate art through writing? Does it make sense to pattern our lessons after the methods used in our former college painting studios? I remember back in college sitting with my classmates midway through

the semester to critique a group of paintings completed by each student in my painting class. My painting instructor had this really cool laid back demeanor when it came to leading a discussion about students' paintings. He had an amazing insight in analyzing an artist's intentions, and comparing the student's work with those of a well known artist.

However, he really communicated his disdain in no uncertain terms when a classmate who was also planning on becoming an art teacher exhibited in his collection a landscape with a body of water in the foreground, forest in the middle ground, and blue and white mountain in the background. In his response my professor was outraged with this student's choice of style. He claimed it resembled a Bob Ross painting. Bob Ross was a painter on public television who developed a formula for producing quick oil paintings of landscapes. I always called him the layman's favorite artist whenever someone wanted to express their amazement for his technique.

Professional painters are not impressed with this man's work, and I am willing to bet that the National Gallery of Art does not have his work on display even though he is now deceased. My instructor did not consider his method of painting acceptable for fine arts standards. This was a very serious issue because the student received a failing grade for his similar production. It does not make sense to declare inferior work without enabling a student to see it first. Rejecting a student's ideas, claims Amabile, is one way to diminish a student's creativity. Her suggestion is to involve students in evaluating their own work and learning from their own mistakes (135). A written self critique in the form of a reflection is perhaps a better way for students to examine their own learning processes, and actively solve their own design problems. With written reflection, claims Calkins,

“Learners look back on what they have done and forward on what they want to do (324).”

A Written Approach

The purpose of this curriculum is to promote students to write in a high school art class while working within the Art Content Standard of **Critical Response** in collaboration with a Communications Content Standard on writing. However, **Critical Response** is another form of assessment which can be performed by a teacher, by peers, or by one's self. Another benefit of including writing in an art course is that we also take our students in the direction of self evaluation of their own art production, and this perhaps could be a favorable instructional expectation among some administrators. For example, listed in her chapter on assessment Lucy Calkins often has her students write an accompanying process log about what they did in order to create a piece of written work (330). This simply required the students to write a critical response

to their collections of writing, or restated they analyze what they have already written in writing.

To do this effectively in evaluating art production, I plan to use the same teaching methods to promote creative writing as I was trained to motivate students to produce art. One method is called the Intrinsic Motivation Principle of Creativity discussed in Growing up Creative (51). Students are motivated to perform a task when it is an enjoyable activity. Writing about art should be interesting as well as challenging. Writing like art must feel relaxing and fun. It is an opportunity for self expression.(60). A pleasurable activity promotes greater motivation and enhances creativity (58).

People will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, enjoyment, satisfaction, and challenge of the work itself-and not by external pressures.

Teresa M. Amabile, Ph.D

What I plan to share with my audience are the steps I have used to motivate my students to write. I will talk about some interesting events that transpired along the way that helped me to answer the questions on how to integrate and teach writing and critique. Finally, I will introduce my method of patiently inspiring my students to write a critique about a piece of art.

Write it Down, Make it Happen

I was about to start a new teaching position last August in an urban high school. Not knowing what to expect I decided to do two things. I would start the year by teaching a painting lesson that was successful in the past, and then I would introduce reflective writing in an art class.

My passion for writing developed a year earlier when a book title jumped out at me the previous summer. Things have a strange way of “happening.” I was dissatisfied with my previous teaching position back in the year 2002, so I did what always made me feel better. I went to Borders Book Store. I could always find something inspirational there.

While I searched for a book in one section of the store my daughter who was six years old at the time demanded my attention. She wanted me to hold her so I found an available chair in the corner near the self-help section, and she went to sleep. As much as I love holding my child in my arms, I was going stir crazy. So I sat there and scanned the titles on the spines of the books arranged on the nearest shelves. I looked a little higher and saw one of those books facing forward. It was entitled *Write It Down, Make It Happen*.

The author, Henrietta Anne Klauser, wrote a book about the power of writing your goals and desires on paper. The act of writing makes your dreams a reality. You can describe a new house you want to buy, a vacation you want to take, or the business you want to start. Just write down the future you want to have.

Well this book did prove to be inspirational in many ways. I began by writing about how wonderful and talented and productive my students are. I would write positive description about student behavior. The year did seem to improve. During that school year I wrote about the wonderful teaching job I was going to land the following year. I wanted to teach high school art in a convenient location, and I wanted to work with a friendly staff, wonderful students, and a professional and supportive administration. It became my reality. I received all I asked for and more.

If that could work for me it can work for my students. First I wrote down my goals for the new school year, then I introduced the concept to my students.

Writing Activity
Tell Me About Yourself

My students began their first writing assignment the first week. I had over one hundred names to memorize, and new personalities to get acquainted with. I tried something new. The students were given a prompt. They answered a series of questions in paragraph form about themselves. They wrote about hobbies, sports, and accomplishments. What I really wanted to learn about them was their true interest in art and their goals for this class. The writings were then compiled into a binder. Even though I immediately read each paper, I made references to these writings periodically. I delighted in observing the changing attitudes the students had towards art over time.

It was great to read the papers that were done correctly. Later it was very uplifting to see the transformation in students who initially resisted writing. The students were expected to fill a page with paragraphs about themselves. All I could get out of Olivia at that time was,

I am sixteen I have no boyfriend.

She never really became serious about producing art, but she did improve her writing.

Exercising patience as Amabile suggests, I thought it would be a good idea not to overwhelm students with too much writing. Halfway through the first nine weeks they were given the next writing assignment. For now, one writing

assignment a month was working for us. It was a change of pace from art production.

Writing Assignment 2

Write an Outcome

In October we applied the concept introduced in *Write it Down, Make it Happen*. Klauser talked about writing a story about your self as if it already happened. This time instead of listing goals in hopes of them happening the students were instructed to write as if their goals were already achieved. It was to be a reflection of all the positive experiences that occurred for them as a result of completing their first art assignment. They wrote about the great piece of art produced and completed, the grade received, the reaction of others, the awards won, the scholarships offered, career opportunities transpiring, and one door opening after another as a result of the first art project.

That was in 12th grade, now I am older and more successful. That piece of work got me into art shows, got me scholarships, and now I work for a major design company. I graduated Art school top of my class, and got many job offers. Now my goal is to one day own the design company I work for.

In time, the writer is to go back and read the story and discover how close the real life outcome resembled the desired results.

Reflection

At some point before the close of the first semester it is a good idea for students to write a reflection about what had transpired for them as a result of taking this class. The students write about how they feel about their artwork now as opposed to September. They write about the new knowledge acquired, what they could have done better, and the direction to pursue next.

In my art class I really haven't got a chance to get to my painting. I have basically been working on my sketchbook. In my sketchbook I have about ten or more sketches. My favorite for now would happen to be the angel wings in the sky. The wings represent a person in my life who has died, and I know is in a better place.

I would like to finish my painting. It has a few colors that look good together. I am looking forward to the completion. Then I would like to work with clay. I will work my hardest.

My Reflection

If you ever get a chance to read *Write it Down, Make it Happen*, you will notice that Dr. Klauser writes about her intentions of writing this book and the interesting coincidences that happened to her and the people around her along the way. These coincidences became material for her book because they became answers to her questions, or solutions to the problems in writing her book.

In writing this curriculum I also had interesting occurrences that happened along the way. At some point last spring I needed to find the best way to inspire my students to write a **Critical Response** to art. I checked out several books and searched the internet. The information was all too complicated for my high school students. Although our goal as educators is to raise the level of student achievement higher, some of these students are on a fourth grade reading level. A large group discussion like the one in my college painting course would not hold their interest. Trying to interpret the artist intentions might be over their heads. I wanted to simplify this process.

Then one day I brought in a piece of art that I purchased days earlier. It was a Memory Block by the Canadian artist Sid Dickens, and I loved it. Before hanging it on my wall at home I wanted to share it with my students.

During my first period class I gave my students some background information on how this piece came to my attention, and I talked about the artist. I never expected the energetic *reaction* of these teenagers, but they too were in awe of its beauty. They asked questions. They asked if they could touch it as they ran their fingers on the texture of the relief surface. They even liked the dark areas that gave it an aged look. Then I pulled out a full color instruction book on how to make memory blocks. Their reaction was to get started right away. I was amazed to learn my students and I shared the same appreciation for art.

Without anticipating it that day I talked informally to high school students about an artist and his work. Again, the students reacted enthusiastically. They asked me to describe the work. Then I expressed the meaning it had for me. Later two students evaluated the work. One planned to go on Ebay to find the blocks at a cheaper price. At the time I did not think she would find any. Who would grow tired of these blocks? The discussion was a preamble to the writing that would follow.

The Coincidence

The very same day I brought the Sid Dickens Memory Block to my classroom I picked up an old copy of *School Arts* off the floor. A student had removed it from a bookshelf consisting of old art related periodicals left behind

by the former art teacher. Instead of returning it to the shelf I suddenly became interested in looking at it. An article on Cubist portraits initially caught my attention. As I looked further, I accidentally found what I was looking for all along. It was an article on art criticism by The Florida State University professor Tom Anderson.

Activity

Process of a Critique

As a result of finding Anderson's article I was able to apply the following steps: Description, Reaction, Analysis, and Evaluation. These steps, I discovered, were the best way to introduce my students to writing an impressive critique on a piece of art. Here is an example of this process using Professor Tom Anderson's formula to describe a Sid Dickens's Memory Block.

What is It?

(Name the artist and title of the work.)

Writing in the Arts and Sciences

This piece is part of a series called Memory Blocks by Sid Dickens. It is entitled "Violin/Mandolin."

Description

It is a 6"x 8" block with partial views of a violin and a mandolin crossing at the necks of both instruments. In between the crossover is an upside down rose. Gently tapered around the strings are leaves and a ribbon tied in a bow. The piece has a creamy white color with a simulated crack on the lower right side. A brown stain gives the sculptured still life an aged look. It is a two inch thick plaster bas-relief wall hanging.

Reaction

I thought it was breath-taking. I chose this block because it was about to retire, but I had to have it. Its three dimensional form and the composition of the subject matter was just the kind of thing that appealed to me. It is elegant and timeless yet it has an old world distinction.

The mandolin reminds me of my Mediterranean heritage, and I appreciate the versatility of the violin and how it can sound when played for Country Music. The block just works so well with my sensibility in creating an aesthetically desirable living space.

Artist Intention

I really did not think about it, but a student asked why the block had a crack on the surface if the piece is new. We tried to explain to him that it was the artist's intention to give his creation a distressed look as if it was a fragment of an old world architectural element.

Evaluation

It is a great piece. It has to be because so many other artists are plagiarizing Sid Dicken's art, and peddling inauthentic reproductions on Ebay. I like his style, creativity, and craftsmanship. I plan to collect more blocks.

Allowing the students to witness and become part of the Dicken's aesthetic prepared them to develop their own appreciation in a context as well.

Strategies Continue

Overcoming Resistance

The problem in getting a high school student to write is not in their ability, it is in their resistance. According to Lucy McCormick Calkins, author of *The Art of Teaching Writing*, the behavior "...is what their age is all about." She asks the questions, "How might we lure our students to care about writing?" "How do we maintain our students' energy for writing (162)?"

Usually the first reaction some high school students have when given a writing assignment in my class is the abrasive, "We ain't 'spose to do no writing in art class." They get upset. Students believe that writing is strictly limited to an academic course. Art class is an escape from the school days rigorous academic expectations. It's a time for fun, a time for creativity, and not a time for writing according to students.

Calkins' suggestion for encouraging older students to write is to foster "flexibility and spontaneity." She believes in responding and building off of students' energies and intentions (161).

A Spontaneous Critique

Sometime after the accidental critique of the Sid Dickens memory block, I went to the far end of my classroom one morning and noticed Josh had left his artwork spread out on a dusty ceramics table where I felt other students would damage his work. Josh at sixteen was already a professional artist, and had

studied art since he was at Rogers, a middle school for the Creative and Performing Arts. I was about to take eight pieces of his best drawing to The All City Art Showcase that week. This year he was eligible to compete for several art scholarships. Initially, I was not happy about his portfolio being removed from safekeeping.

Upon the start of first period a student wandered back there and suddenly had a burst of excitement. Her reaction attracted other students to rush to the back of the room. They all reacted with excitement over Josh's incredible drawing talent. Josh is amazingly talented for his age both in skill and conception. The students asked many questions about the art. Someone was interested in purchasing a detailed drawing while another student wanted a copy for a tattoo.

They all admired his skill for traditionally duplicating realism into a surrealist composition. With all that going on I realized we were having another unplanned critique. This time I lured the students to write. "Let's turn your reaction into an 'A.' Go back to your tables and write your feelings about Josh's artwork," I directed. That energy was poured onto paper without resistance.

Later that day while I spoke to Josh one of the students who wrote her reaction about his art returned to my classroom on an unrelated matter. After realizing who was present she praised the artist in person as if he was a celebrity. Soon many students began to notice Josh and his extraordinary achievements with his art. Josh inspired them.

Reaction

D.B.A.E. is also interested in helping students experience what is passionate, what is moving, what is aesthetic not only about the arts, but about all those aspects of the world from which aesthetic experience can be secured.

Elliot W. Eisner
Stanford University

At this point I want to cut through all the primary processes of criticism such as description, interpretation, philosophical evaluation, and theorizing. It is too soon for my students to write about the subject or theme. It is too complicated to write about the social or political concerns of the arts. Why analyze the artist intentions or the function of the arts in society?

The experience that occurred with Josh's portfolio prompted an idea to try out as a critical response writing assignment. As I have been exploring a way to

integrate critical response into a successful writing curriculum it occurred to me to focus on the process of **Reaction**.

A reaction to art is spontaneous, quick and must capture the sudden feeling invoked as a result of viewing a work of art for the first time. I want my students to write while the “feeling” is hot. It is the initial reaction one experiences when hearing a song for the first time, or how one feels when meeting someone appealing. I want to capture the students’ infatuation for the work of art.

Classroom Activities

In April I brought to my classroom a painting I had done in the college painting class I wrote about earlier. In my opinion it is one of two of the best works of art I have produced so far in my lifetime.

We did a brief “mini” art history lesson on Renaissance painters in the anticipatory set. The students viewed some art prints of work done by the dramatic Renaissance artist Michelangelo Caravaggio. I spoke of how this artist inspired my own painting style. Then my painting was revealed, and the writing paper distributed.

*I think it is about a man who has lost feeling to his life
To the outside world he keeps to his self locked in
his house all day looking at the wall. I hope one day
he can be on the other side. Olivia*

Most students wrote their reactions as I had hoped. They enjoyed the assignment and the oil painting of a seated young man in deep thought. Students who had resisted writing in the past participated in a writing assignment for the first time. I even offered to write one student’s interpretation of the painting as he narrated his thoughts. His expressions were very meaningful. As for Olivia she theorized about the subject. The portrait was done seventeen years ago of a friend. She is very insightful. That is what the subject became.

I believe the critique was successful. Even a classroom discussion transpired. We will do this again, but not too often. Critical Response assignments will be a dessert. It will be an unexpected treat from our usual routine, production.

It Happened

After the Critical Response assignment writing is now an accepted activity in my art class. Some students even write when not required. In May I shared my sketchbook with some students. I had tried my hand at poetry, and incorporated it into a drawing. Olivia wrote three poems during one class period. Other students admired the idea and now include writing in their art projects. My poem/drawing was so admired by one student she chose to write her final exam about the sketch from her memory.

*Let me tell you about this piece of art I had seen and I love it.
It was a picture with a poem going around it. The poem matched
the picture. It was a drawing of a hair comb clip and a clockwatch.
As soon as I saw it I wanted to do something similar. The drawing
really inspired me.*

The Final Exam

In a final happy ending to discovering the process of how to teach and motivate writing in a high school art class while implementing one of the Four Foundational Art Disciplines, all of my students were able to write a critique on one of eight drawings from Josh's portfolio. Again it wasn't my plan to have students write about a student's work. It just happened that way. After I brought back Josh's work from the student art show he displayed them on my chalk board during the final days of the school year. My original intent was to give each student a different copy of a painting by various artists in history. It did not work out that way. Almost all students *responded* very well to this serious art student's extraordinary talent.

The students saw things and expressed impressions of the work that never would have occurred to me. I enjoyed reading every critique by over one hundred students. Even though most students followed the format of writing four paragraphs on description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation each written work was original. I really do enjoy reading what my students think. I am either impressed with the intelligence of some students, or amused by the unusual way they express their thoughts. I intend to save these writings as part of their portfolios. I chose to print a critique by a student who was not confident to write until now.

The painting that I am looking at looks like a soldier at war. It looks like he has a spiritual belief, or he has God on his side. There is a church in the background or fort. Maybe God is protecting the fort. There is a dog chain. He may have found it and he is looking at it. The dog chain may have belonged to someone else. Maybe it belonged to someone he just killed. It may be cold outside because he appears to be bundled up. The way the soldier

looks he looks like he may be hiding. He may be sneaking up on someone at the same time he is trying to blend in with the background. He may be searching for somebody or he may be guarding a place. Perhaps he found the dog chain while on patrol.

Looking Towards the Future

At the end of the school year when the students had left for their summer break and the report cards were completed, it was the time for teachers to get reacquainted with colleagues from other departments. I attended a retirement luncheon at a prestigious Pittsburgh restaurant, and had the pleasure of being seated with a very impressive young English teacher who was about to leave our school district to pursue a doctorate degree. That event may be the last time I will ever have the opportunity to speak to her again; however, she passed on some very valuable information.

The English teacher had told me about the requirement for graduating seniors to have several examples of their writings in their portfolios. The problem was twofold: an English teacher lacks the time to cover all methods of writing in order to fulfill the portfolio requirements, and there is not an opportunity to collaborate with teachers in other departments about student writing. Writing a critique on art was not something this teacher was doing in her classes. However, she agreed that including that type of writing from another genre would really help the English department in enabling students to collect a body of writing so they can graduate.

I was certain then that exploration of establishing writing in the art classroom and, consequently, writing this curriculum had paid off. There is a purpose greater than I had realized. The groundwork has been laid out for next year as far as writing goes. My ability to include writing assignments will improve. My students desire to write will improve. The outcome will be to include these writings in their graduation portfolios.

School Year Writing Activities

- September Tell Me About Yourself**
- During the first week of school students write to a prompt. Students write about themselves and their interest in art. Write in paragraph form.
- October Write it Down Make It Happen**
- Students write goals in story form as if their goals were already achieved. Objective is to write a self fulfilling prophesy about how well the first art project was completed, the grade received, the positive response from others, and the doors that were opened as a result of completing the art project.
- November Write a Reflection
(After first 9 weeks)**
- Students write a reflection about the completion or progress of their art work. Students write about the similarity of their work to a historical period or famous artist. Students write about discovering their art abilities or skills. Students look back upon how their feeling about art and art production have change. Students express the direction they are interested in pursuing artistically.
- January Midterm Exam**
- Essay portions: Reflection on most recent work in addition Students write a pro or con paragraph on the work of a well known artist. Example: Andy Warhol on plagiarism or originality. Students will observe displayed examples of completed students artwork and write a paragraph on what they believe is the worse example of the assignment (or best example of meeting expectation).
- February Reflection on completed work during first semester.
(2nd semester) Tell me about yourself (second semester students)**
- April Reaction:** Students write about their reaction to teachers artwork.
- May Reflection of most recent art production.**

**Example
Final Exam
Critical Response**

For your final exam you will look at a print of a painting by a famous artist. Then you will write a four paragraph critique about the painting. Include the title of the painting and the name of the artist.

In accordance with your English class expectation, a paragraph will consist of five sentences.

PARAGRAPH ONE

Description: Write a description of the painting. Write it as if you are writing to a friend or you are describing it over the phone. Describe details.

PARAGRAPH TWO

Analysis: Look at the composition of the painting and explain how the elements of art and the principals of design are organized. Found on a separate sheet of paper are a word list with brief definitions to be used for this paragraph. You are expected to use at least two elements art and one principle of design.

PARAGRAPH THREE

Interpretation: How does this painting make you feel? What is your initial reaction when you looked at this painting? Are you impressed with the skill of the artist or the idea. **How** are you inspired?

PARAGRAPH FOUR

Evaluation: Is this a good painting? What are its strengths or weaknesses? What would you do to make it better?

Note to audience: (Substitutions)

Subject for critique could be another student's artwork.
Students can select one piece of a serious art student's portfolio.
A pair of students can critique each other's work.
Students can critique the work of the art teacher, artist-in-residence or local artist.

Pertinent Art Vocabulary

You will be expected to use art related vocabulary to describe or analyze the artwork on your final exam. Below are a list of words and brief definition for your review. Make an effort to use at least two elements of art to write a descriptive analysis.

Elements of Art

The elements are features of a piece of art used to describe how the artwork looks.

Line: A mark that moves from point A to point B.

Are the lines straight, curved, broken, horizontal, or vertical?

Shape: A line that returns to point A to form an enclosed area. (square, triangle, circle, etc.)

What is the dominant repeated shape in the painting?

Form: Three-dimensional shape. (sphere, cylinder, cube, or cone)

Does the painting contain shapes that give the objects more than one side?

Does anything stand out three-dimensionally?

Space: Area separated by lines and shapes to create a feeling of depth.

Can you describe the space around an object?

Colors: Examples- Red, Yellow, Blue, etc. Hues can be warm or cold.

Values: Lightness or darkness of a color.

Pink is a lighter shade of red. What is a lighter shade of black?

Texture: Roughness or smoothness of a surface.

Describe the textures simulated in the painting.

Principles of Design

Use one or more of the vocabulary below to describe or analyze the artwork on your final exam. It is best to use a term that makes the most sense to you to describe the painting, or use a term that you understand.

The principles are features of a piece of art used to describe how the artwork looks.

Balance: Symmetrical and asymmetrical balance.

Is there a presence of equality or inequality?

Unity: The elements look like they belong together.

Is there a wholeness or oneness in the work?

Emphasis: Focal area. The dominating feature of the work which grabs the most attention.

Is there an area of the painting that pulls in the greater attention or stands out?

Movement: Linear direction. Elements that direct the viewers attention.

Does this painting lead your eye in any specific direction?

Contrast: Differences within elements: contrasting textures, shapes, or color intensity.

Are there warm and cool colors present? Are there geometric and freeform shapes?

Rhythm: Repetition of elements or a progression of principles.

Are there repeated shapes and colors that flow?

Pattern: Planned repetition within a work of art or natural patterns found on animals or plants.

Is there a strong presence of repeating patterns of shape, line or color?

Bibliography Resources

Calkins, Lucy McCormick. *The Art of Teaching Writing*: Ontario: Irwin Publishing, 1994.

A text book about establishing a writing environment in the classroom.

The National Visual Arts Standard: Reston VA: National Art Education Association. Programs of Promise; Art in Schools, 1994.

The National Art Education Association's publication on The National Visual Arts Standards.

Maimon, Elaine P. et al. *Writing in the Arts and Sciences*: Winthrop Publishers Inc. 20Cambridge, Mass: Analyzing a Painting or Other Graphic Work, p.165, 1981.

A college level guide on writing in the Arts and Science written by several college professors.

Dobbs, Stephen Mark. *Learning In and Through Art: A Guide to Discipline-based Art Education*: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Los Angeles, CA, 1998.

Dobbs writes a very valuable guide for teaching a D.B.A.E curriculum. A must have book for all Art Educators. Many informative resources included.

Klausere, Henriette Anne, PhD. *Write It Down Make It Happen*: Fireside, New York, NY, 2000.

Klauser explains how simply writing down your goals is the first step in achieving them.

Amabile, Teresa M. Ph.D. *Growing Up Creative: Nurturing a Lifetime of Creativity*: Crown Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, 1998.

A book about fostering creativity and the pitfalls to avoid in destroying it in others

Anderson, Tom. *School Arts: Inspiring Creativity in Teaching; Vol. 97, No. 1 Sept. 199*: Article, *Talking to Kids About Art*: Professor of Art Education at The Florida State University in Talahassee, Florida.

Anderson shares an effective but workable process for high school student to write a critique on art.

Brindel, Joan et al. *Art & Humanities Visual arts Syllabi*: Brindel, Joan et al. Pittsburgh Public Schools, Pittsburgh, PA, 2003.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools Art Education Syllabi is a good source on how the school district interprets and facilitates the standard.

Student Bibliography

Elements and Principles of Design: Student Guide with Activities: Crystal Productions, Glenview, Illinois, 2000

A great and simple resource on art related vocabulary for use in the classroom.

Appendices-Standards

Discipline-Based Art Education: an approach to learning in art. It is categorized into four separate foundational disciplines in art.

Four Foundational Art Disciplines: Art production, Art History, Art Criticism, and Aesthetics

State Standards: The state of Pennsylvania has adopted the Four Disciplines of Art as the standards for achievement for all public school students in Pennsylvania.

Standards are requirements for student achievement while acquiring an Art Education.

District Standards: The Board of Education of Pittsburgh Public Schools has also recognize Discipline-Based Art Education as a teaching method for Art Education.

The Four Foundational Art Disciplines

Art Production: The act of producing art. The task of creating art. The student is expected to develop techniques and skills through hands-on involvement in a variety of art experiences. Examples: drawing, painting, crafts, wheel throwing etc.

Historical and Cultural Context: The student recognizes a variety of art forms and art relating to a particular historical period and/or a geographic location.

Critical Response: Students evaluate and respond critically to works from the visual arts of various individuals and cultures, showing they understand important features of the work. Use art vocabulary to analyze art.

Aesthetic Response: The philosophy of interpreting a work of art. A viewer of a piece of art observes the style and technique of an artist then explains the meaning of the artwork or the intent of the artist.

A Recipe to Bomb Creativity

Over structure a task	Criticize the child	Pressure child to perform task
Control the task	Reject child's ideas	Impatience with child's task
Promise reward	Set time limits	Engage in a power struggle
Hold a contest	Evaluate task	Hostility concerning task
Restrict choice	Withhold praise	Appear ashamed of child

From Growing Up Creative by Teresa M. Amabile, Ph.D. 1989

An abbreviated list of Visual Art requirements concerning writing and critique.

Student Requirements and Expected Levels of Achievement for Pittsburgh Public Schools (from Visual Arts Syllabi)

- Submit written reflections on three or more art projects to demonstrate ability to describe analyze, interpret, and judge artwork.
- Participate in class discussions, peer reviews, and critiques.
- Complete related academic work.