

Overview of Case Studies

The preliminary best practices and challenges, discussed above, may be applied to many LTA residencies. Teaching, however, is a highly nuanced practice in which context can be very important. Case descriptions of the LTA class sessions can examine how the various practices are integrated into the larger class session and ongoing curriculum. To that end the research team developed case studies of selected class sessions, highlighting some of the practices important for creativity.

Case Study: Modeling the Printing Process

PS 9 (Teunis G. Bergen School) is a primary school that serves children from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade in Brooklyn, New York. The school has approximately 672 students enrolled with 74 students in the second grade. Over three quarters of the student population is black with Hispanic and Asian students representing the second and third largest ethnic percentages. From the first observations at PS 9 to the last interview, the issue of modeling arose on many occasions. In the case study illustrated below, several aspects of the observation will be highlighted through this constant thread of modeling creativity.

The exterior of PS 9 is common to many New York public schools. A concrete exterior with a few basketball courts and a play area are shielded by a ten foot tall fence separating the city from the school environment. A class of 6th graders was seen shooting baskets while two adults supervised. On the inside, however, this school was distinctive, with the role of the Guggenheim LTA program immediately apparent. The long entrance area was decorated with many student artworks along the borders of the foyer.

Modeling Inquiry

The class began when the teaching artist and the teaching assistant entered the classroom. The classroom was filled with posters and former lessons covering every last corner of wall space. Spelling lists and rules for classroom behavior are two examples of the many hand written posters. Lists and former projects were even hung from the ceiling like a clothesline.

The classroom teacher welcomed the teaching artist and the researchers visiting the class that particular day. The teaching artist then started right away and began by sitting the class on the area rug in the corner of the classroom. She read a bookmaking (How To) project that the students had created between classes about the printmaking process. Today was the second in a series of five classes on printmaking, and the how-to book indicated that the students understood the process. The teaching artist read the book and commented on how well thought out it was. She verbally commended them for their effort and explained what would take place in today's class (looking activity, drawing in sketchbooks of their own landmark, and transferring design to printing blocks).



The teaching artist began the inquiry activity with an image by Pissarro. She modeled questioning assumptions as she encouraged the students to think more carefully about their answers. On the whole, the students were articulate in their answers and justified their observations with visual cues they could indicate. Once the discussion reached a certain point, the teaching artist used a Venn diagram to visually represent their continued discussion. Here, the teaching artist modeled and then assigned a form of cross-modal

thinking. Thinking visually and verbally, the students compared the details of Pissarro's image to their own urban community. Students observed what was unique about the environment within the painting reproduction and in their urban environment as well as what was similar between the two. Students felt that the clothes, style, the fact that there were no cars, and the type of housing were unique to the Pissarro image. Especially compared to the amount of stores, towers, and noise present in their own neighborhood. A few similarities did exist including nature, trees, grass, and the presence of roads. The conversation was engaging and interactive.

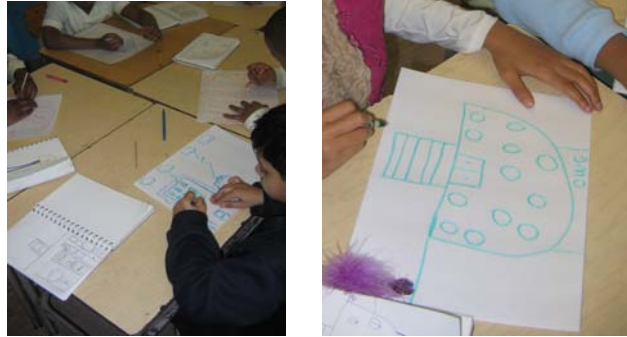
Considering Multiple Options

A transition period separated the inquiry period from the start of the art making aspect of the day's lesson. To encourage the sketchbook activity that was next, the teaching artist talked about who was making the different aspects of their community project. The students were instructed to first draw their own idea of a local building, landmark, etc... The teaching artist modeled the process on the white board by drawing a simple structure with basic details. She then encouraged them after they had finished their first drawing to think, "What could I do differently?" Modeling consideration of multiple options, the teaching artist then redrew her initial idea on the white board with some possible changes.

Facilitating Collaboration and Problem-finding

The desks were arranged in groups of four and six which facilitated the exchange of ideas. After sketching ideas, students were encouraged to share their images with classmates seated within their cluster. The ideas generated at each desk for this particular project sometimes were then borrowed and reinvented. A student at the far end of the class had drawn birds using an m shape. Following this action, three students sitting in this cluster also added birds with an m shape to their compositions (one student reversed the m shape in her composition so they looked like the letter w). During this structured collaboration exercise, two boys also developed ways of representing lightening. (See earlier discussion in the Best Practices section of this report.)

In both the example of the birds and the lightening, the students' collaborations facilitated problem-finding. These students were enlarging the scope of the assignment, which had asked that they draw buildings. They recognized that buildings exist in environments which posed new problems of how to represent elements of the environment.



The teaching artist continued to model the reflection process throughout the course, often asking the class for their attention during the work process and asking a question to promote reflection. Noticing that students were rushing through their two drawings, the teaching artist asked that they “imagine more options” for their drawings.

The teaching artist continued to model an aspect of creative thinking by asking them to question their decisions and choices. An example of a struggle that students encountered when creating the designs for their buildings – including pizza stands, hospitals, and malls – was distinguishing the buildings' functions. The teaching artist asked how people would know that your building is a hospital? What signs or symbols are you using? In other words, here the teaching artist identified an emerging issue in the work, the problems of distinguishing function. This prompted many students to experiment with lettering (backwards for printing) and the use of signs/symbols like a cross to represent a hospital. One student drew many different objects at the top of her building to represent what was sold at a mall (bikes, clothing, etc...). As the researchers talked to each student in the classroom, students were able to articulate their decision making process and provide visual examples of their reasoning.

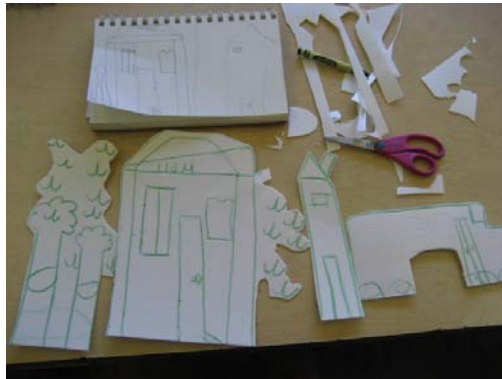
Once students were satisfied with their drawings in the sketchbooks, those images were redrawn onto a piece of foam to be used as printing blocks. The students transferred

their drawings and were instructed to cut out along the side of the structures they created. Materials for each stage were handed out by the teaching assistant through the process. When ready for the foam, students would raise their hands and be supplied with the necessary tool. A similar situation occurred when students were ready for the cutting process. In other words, the students gained access to materials at the pace at which they worked.



Modeling Decisions

Before beginning the cutting process, the teaching artist modeled the possible choices the students could make in addition to the process itself. Using example that the classroom teacher had designed, the teaching artist demonstrated possible cutting techniques. She used three examples and then put them away so the students could complete the task themselves. Through the instructions the teaching artist modeled and encouraged the students to think through the possible solutions they may have had. By using three examples, she demonstrated that there was not one answer but many and she encouraged them to explore the options.



Finishing the Lesson

When the students had finished their cutting project they were asked to give their materials and final project to the teaching assistant and the classroom teacher. When finished, the classroom teacher then asked the students to bring their sketchbooks over to the rug area where the lesson began. They were instructed to choose a part of the Pissarro landscape they initially looked at and to draw it in their sketchbooks. If they grew tired of that, they could then draw from imagination. The teaching artist quickly cleared the room of scraps and organized her materials while the students slowly transferred to the rug area. The teaching artist joined them after a few minutes and then wrapped up the lesson with a short discussion on what had surprised them about the process today. Several students commented during this discussion with remarks about what their words would look like after printing and “wondering how it (print) will come out.” For example, some wondered whether writing backward on the foam (printing block) would actually print forward.



Afterwards the researchers had the opportunity to ask the classroom teacher questions about her involvement in the LTA program. She was very excited about the possibilities it provided, specifically how it had developed greater observational and critical thinking skills in her students. In the spirit of constructive criticism, she expressed a desire to fulfill her role better in the classroom. She desired continual professional development to learn more about the artists, art form and technique, etc. so that she could really integrate this information into other areas within the curriculum.



Modeling is considered to be one of the most crucial aspects of encouraging creativity. The culture of the PS 9 community, the context of the classroom, and the teaching process of the teaching artist incorporated several strategies for modeling creativity. Acting as role model, the teaching artist encouraged students to question their decisions. The classroom teacher also modeled and enabled cross-modal thinking as she reinforced the printing process in a book making activity, which she supervised outside of the LTA class sessions. Lastly, the culture of the classroom conveyed the important aspects of the children's work by placing it in areas of importance throughout the school and in the classroom.