

## **Teaching From An Art Cart**

by

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As the challenges of a constantly changing educational reform movement unfold for the Twenty-First Century and many aspects of schooling are being updated, one element remains frozen in time: art teachers are still teaching from an Art Cart. The practice of itinerant art instruction has remained virtually unchanged for generations.

Ideally, art instruction should take place in a well-equipped art room, however, this is not always the case. In many schools throughout the country; art and music specialists have had their programs relegated to a cart due to a resurgence in student population and lack of building space.

Flexibility and innovations in organizational skills, creative problem-solving, instruction, and public relations go “hand-in-hand” with being an itinerant art teacher.

In response to many itinerant teachers request to better their situations, this advisory highlights some insights and ideas which we hope will equip educators to meet the challenges of teaching from a cart.

### **Time Allocated Between Classes**

- An itinerant art teacher who teaches in several classrooms needs time to unload one stock of materials and load others onto a cart or into a carton, as well as time to briefly prepare the next lesson. If the art teacher must travel to several classrooms, these should not be scheduled consecutively in opposite ends of a building. (1992)
- Work with your principal to create a realistic schedule that builds in 5 minutes traveling and set-up time to make a smoother transition from class to class.

### **Organizational Skills Are Key**

- Solicit your principal’s assistance in acquiring one or two art carts which are designed for itinerant teaching. There are several options: smaller light-weight carts are less bulky and easier to maneuver; heavy duty rubber carts are excellent for wet items and do not have sharp edges or corners which can injure operators; or, portable closed cabinet models with storage shelves for two dimensional materials. Christine Laue, veteran itinerant art teacher with fifteen years experience, feels “it is better to have a separate cart for each level of the building in which you teach”.
- Consider standard coloring materials a staple and always have plenty on hand, along with glue, scissors, and construction paper for those students who finish early.
- Always carry your class schedule, school floor plan, and a smock.
- Be prepared for any situation. Carry a trash bag which can be clipped or taped to the side of the cart along with spring-type clothespins to hang wet and/or dry handiwipes.
- Carry your own office supplies, e.g., stapler, clips, tape, etc.
- Check out each classroom in advance for general layout, sink, and furniture.
- Prearrange with classroom teachers to have desks grouped in 4’s to access sharing of materials.
- Arrange with the classroom teacher for an area where wet objects can be dried and provide them with a box as storage for dry projects. Solicit their assistance in not sending projects home until you authorize it.
- Use small spring clips or bungi cords on side of the cart to hold samples.
- Place the art room rules on a chart clipped to the front of the cart.
- Purchase inexpensive stacking crates or tote trays, preferably color-coded, to fit into moveable carts. These can be used for precut or prepared two-dimensional materials or to house supplies for a total art lesson. The color coding will assist in identifying the appropriate grade or level, e.g., yellow—early childhood, red—primary, blue—intermediate.
- Plastic dishpans are excellent storage containers for markers or crayons.
- If a sink in each room is not available, use heavy-duty half-gallon containers for water. Student helpers can fill the buckets in the nearest restrooms.
- So that clean-up and set-up for the following class will be more efficient, keep at least a two class supply of brushes on the cart.

- Prepare set-up kits ahead of time for printing—cookie sheets or old cafeteria trays with ink and brayer; drawing tools—tall plastic containers with pencils, rulers, etc.; fiber materials—dividers inside a large cardboard box to house yarn, holes can be poked around the side so that the ends can be found; paints—separate tote trays with primary and secondary tempera cakes rather than liquid.

### **Realistic Curriculum Expectations**

- Try to develop a curriculum that parallels the facilities and the schedule.
- Keep 3-dimensional projects to a minimum and small in size. Concentrate on 2-dimensional projects.
- Be realistic when choosing a particular medium. Minimize color selection to make a class more manageable. Substitute if need be, e.g., watercolors versus temperas, oil crayons rather than pastels, etc. Self-hardening clays legitimately provide students with a satisfactory experience.
- Keep the length of each project to a reasonable amount of time.
- Remember that basic materials such as markers, crayons, glue, and construction paper can be combined in numerous forms and keep a program well-balanced.
- Prearrange with the classroom teacher to have a student enrichment center available in the room, e.g., art visuals used for teaching art history or art books. These can be housed and shared during the week when you are not teaching the class.
- Evaluating student's work can be a challenge. Place work on desks and have students circulate around the room or try taping art work on a bungi cord that can be stretched across two points.

### **Facilitate Good Relationships**

- The principal, custodian, and classroom teachers can be your best advocates.
- Seek your principals assistance when attempting to set a school-wide policy such as having each teacher prearrange the furniture.
- Become aware of individual tolerances when planning particular activities that are messy and require long-term storage.
- Make a point of returning the room to the way you found it.
- On a positive note, teaching from a cart provides insight into other subject areas and possible correlated activities.
- Offer to team teach a unit that ties into your lesson or curriculum.
- Realize that you are an integral part of the total structure. Cooperation and consideration are a key issue.
- Displaying correlated artwork, murals or projects can be a positive experience for all.
- Special attention needs to be directed to school and state policy regarding students' assistance in moving large equipment such as an art cart or portable dry rack.

### **Art Preparation/Storage Room Recommendations**

- A room is necessary to house equipment, materials, tools, etc. It should be centrally located and accessible only to the art specialist.
- Adequate lighting, work tables, heating, and ventilation are a must.
- Space for storage of art cart(s) or a moveable dry rack.
- A large sink with hot and cold water is a necessity, as is a paper towel dispenser.
- Sturdy shelving of various depths are needed for storage of paper, folders, unfinished projects, etc.
- A teachers' desk, with chair and file cabinet are most desirable.
- If possible, a separate room should be provided for the ceramic kiln equipped with proper ventilation.

### **Stay Light-Hearted**

- Make the most of your cart. Try transforming it when teaching a concept or art history style.
- Create a mini-display of student art work from the cart.
- Have a sense of humor, make the job fun rather than frustrating.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes and keep smiling.
- Teaching from a cart can be a challenge, but it can also be a positive experience, it all depends upon your vision. An affirmative attitude coupled with professionalism will reap endless rewards and a satisfying career.

### **References**

- Susan Costello, "Art a la Carte". *School Arts*, September, 1988.
- Audrey Worman, "Art from a Rolling Cart", *Arts and Activities*, November, 1992.

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