

Creating Future Art Educators: A School-to-Work Experience in the Art Room

Susan Weinstock, President, Florida Art Education Association

Does the future shortage of teachers concern you? Do you wonder what will happen to the quality of your program when this happens in your school district? Do you feel left out because your school has a strong school-to-work initiative but the arts are not included in the plan? This Advisory is about one school's answers to these challenges. You may find some answers to help solve similar issues at your school.

During the 1996-97 school year, Mount Dora High School started a Teaching Assistant class. Art students were assigned to the high school art teacher who supervised an internship program for art students interested in exploring art education as a career. Since there were no certified visual art instructors at the neighboring elementary schools, advanced art students were able to provide an essential service while experiencing career exploration. The program proved successful and has continued as a part of our school's curriculum.

Where to Begin:

- Propose the course to the principal and guidance office.
- Meet with the elementary administration team and/or a designee to construct guidelines for the program at each school.
- Find out what considerations and questions each school may have concerning the program and agree on a procedure that will best suit each school.
- Designate one administrator or teacher to be the contact for each elementary school.
- Obtain any special school forms that the high school students need to have signed in order to be a volunteer at the elementary school.
- Promote the program among your students.

Student Responsibilities:

- Advanced art students are interviewed, and if accepted, must sign a contract to participate in the class. Those chosen for the program are teamed with a grade level (class or classes) at the neighboring elementary schools. They become the Visiting Art Instructor for those classes.
- Each student is responsible for lesson plans that, whenever possible, are tied into the current curriculum of the grade level classes and fulfill the state standards (in our case, Sunshine State Standards).
- Students research and choose learning resources to accompany their activities, noting historical and cultural connections.
- Students create concrete examples for their lessons, and collaborate with the grade level teachers.
- Students maintain journals which include their lesson plans, examples for their lessons, ideas and research for future lessons, and reflections of their teaching experiences. They also record their feelings about what they did and how it made them feel.
- Students become acquainted with art education publications.

- Students create art based games to play with their students.
- Students teach their lessons and evaluate what they taught for grade level appropriateness. They revise their lessons when they observe the student's learning would be enhanced by a change.
- Students exhibit the work of their students through displays at the local art festival.

Art Teaching Assistants have done a variety of activities with their students ranging from engaging the elementary students in discussion about what is art, art in their lives, art that they see, to art that they make. They have made puppets and written stories about their puppets; they have studied the trees in the school yard and created leaf prints from the foliage; they have studied perspective drawing their school neighborhood. Supplies for these activities are furnished by the teachers, the high school students, and through extra materials purchased by the high school. This creates a real need for the Art Teaching Assistant to plan ahead so they know that the resources needed will be available.

The Results:

As a result of this teaching experience, high school students are receiving scholarships aided by their volunteerism and summer employment. The City Recreation Department and Center for the Arts hires the Teaching Assistants as regular teachers for their Children's summer arts classes. Some graduates are now in colleges and universities looking forward to a career as an art educator.

Brain research suggests that it is harder to make career choice before the age of 25, the years that our students are preparing for their future. The role of the dedicated teaching professional includes promoting the profession to the future generations. We do this through modeling and advocating the value of art education. If we, as high school art teachers, can instill in our students the passion to teach, the decision of what to do with their future will be made easier while ensuring the continuation of our profession.

With the impending teacher shortage being recognized as a national concern, President Clinton announced in August 2000 a new online teacher recruitment clearing house to help schools and districts find qualified teachers over the next decade. This web site: <http://www.recruitingteachers.org>, connects teachers with online job banks and job listings and provides more than 150 educational links.

Susan Weinstock teaches art at Mount Dora High School and is the current president of Florida Art Education Association and Southeastern Region Vice President-Elect of the NAEA. Contact her at 700 North Highland Street, Mount Dora, FL 32757, e-mail: mysticsue@aol.com