

What Makes This TEAM Reflection Paper Successful?

Some specific examples/evidence that contributed to the success of this paper are provided below.

Module Four: Assessment

Grade: 5

Subject: Art

Criteria I: Development of New Learning (How the teacher developed new learning and what was learned)

How the teacher developed new learning:

- Reading publications: Children and Their Art: Methods for The Elementary School by Hurwitz and Day, Assessment in Art Education by Bettie, The First Days of School: How to Be An Effective Teacher by Wong and Wong, Grading Art by Bartel
- Online research about a program, *Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)* by Housen and Yenowine
- Observation by and conversations with mentor, conversations with colleagues

What the teacher learned:

- Assessment is more than a method for grading; it is a tool for *“improving instruction, increasing the interest and motivational levels of students, and providing ongoing feedback to both the teacher and student on student progress.”*
- Students are apt to be more successful with self-assessment if they are first placed in teams or groups when starting out with a new form of assessment.
- Using multiple forms of assessment provides “a more comprehensive picture of what students know than any single assessment does.”

Criteria II: Impact on Practice (How the teacher’s practice is different)

- Employing the VTS (Visual Teaching Strategies) program as a way to pre-assess her student’s knowledge of Native American Art. Using *“this tool for pre-assessing student knowledge of a given art form kept me from trying to provide instruction on something they are already familiar with, so that I could move on to new information.”*
- Implementing the tool of student journaling from the book, Assessment in Art Education. Students were prompted to include art terms and ideas as well as to write about areas where they were succeeding or where they struggled. The teacher read the student entries and noted any areas that needed re-teaching or determined which students might need extra help.
- When introducing students to looking at art in a formal museum setting, the teacher decided to employ Bartel’s suggestion of using teams; *“I thought they would have more success in small groups. I chose the groups ahead of time based on my existing knowledge of the students’ strengths and weaknesses, both academically and behaviorally, for optimal success of each group.”*

Criteria III: Impact on Students (How student performance/learning has improved as a result of changes in the teacher’s practice.)

- *“I was much energized after this process because it was the best discussion about artwork that this group has had. Students were using art terms to describe the work and giving opinions with specific evidence about the art work.”*
- *“During the ‘The Day of the Dead’ lesson, I noticed that not only were students assessing their own work based on the scoring guide, but they were instructing their classmates on things they could do to make their skulls look more like the number 4. This led to better quality artwork from the students.”*
- *“This process (student journaling) helped me discover that two of my students were having a great deal of trouble with the circular shape of the weaving and once we changed their projects to rectangular shapes they had great success.”*

Indicator: 1. Teachers use multiple measures to analyze student performance and to inform subsequent planning and instruction by: Using and/or designing a variety of formative assessments and summative assessments and criteria that directly align with the learning objectives and value the diversity of ways in which students learn. See additional notes at the end of the document.

Goal:

I will learn to design multiple forms of assessments, both formative and summative, which will provide the information I need to measure student learning over time, direct the planning of my lessons to meet students' needs and allow students a variety of ways to demonstrate their learning.

Initial Summary:

I reviewed the CCT Performance Profile with my mentor and discussed the fact that multiple forms of assessment in elementary art have not been used in our district. Furthermore, I recognize that I have been relying almost completely on summative assessments. Although I do ask my students questions orally each week about past and present concepts, my common classroom practice is to use a rubric at the end of each unit for evaluation of lesson objectives. Students assign themselves a score based on five categories; developing skills at grade level, understanding and application of art concepts, participation, use of materials, and behavior. I collect the rubrics to see how their assessment compares to mine. It is teacher directed and measures skill and behavior, rather than knowledge and growth. Although students are supposed to be using this as a tool to help them see if they have met their goals, I have noticed that 98% of the rubrics show all the highest scores, rather than accurately reflecting the students' work. It is viewed by the students as a means to achieve a grade rather than to measure their learning. They are unable to adequately assess their own work with this rubric. Furthermore, it does not provide me with the information I need to differentiate instruction or provide students alternative ways to demonstrate their learning. The rubrics are kept in a grade level binder to be used for grades, so the only direct feedback students are getting in terms of assessment is when we have discussions about their work during a gallery walk. Even this is mostly teacher directed and does not provide data to direct future instruction or measure student learning. I recognize that my students and I would benefit tremendously from the use of a variety of both pre and post formative and summative assessments.

Reflection Paper:

When discussing indicator 1 in the assessment performance profile with my mentor, I became aware of my lack of variety of assessments and the ineffective use of the data gathered to drive instruction. Poorly designed rubrics and inconsistent use of summative assessments have allowed me to measure little more than knowledge and skills pertaining to the objectives of particular lessons. This rarely results in information that helps in future planning, but does present information about student achievement with course curriculum. Occasional use of gallery walks and oral questioning have provided different ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge, but these are limited and teacher driven. Oral questioning only allows some students to show their knowledge because the number of questions is limited.

I had begun compiling data on student growth over time by creating an Art Book for my kindergarten students, but during discussions with my mentor it became evident that I would need to look at where I wanted to end in terms of assessment and work backwards through the grade levels. Starting with the fifth grade, I knew I needed to restructure the way I use assessments so that I can continually measure student knowledge and growth, plan and differentiate instruction, and provide students alternative ways to demonstrate their learning.

The fifth grade was about to begin a unit on culture covering three very different lessons that would be perfect for introducing multiple forms of assessment. These assessments would measure both skill level and knowledge to provide information on student achievement as it pertains to a unit of instruction based on visual arts in relation to history and culture.

Discussions with my mentor and colleagues, professional reading, and internet research, enabled me to formulate a plan for developing and using both formative and summative assessments that would align with my curriculum and provide students a variety of tools for demonstrating their skill level and knowledge. Information from these assessments would help me to develop lessons and create a unit of differentiated assessments rather than simply evaluate the end product. Assessing art is different than regular classroom assessments, so I looked outside of suggested resource materials and purchased books that were specific to assessment in art.

I began my reading with *Children and Their Art: Methods For The Elementary School* by Al Hurwitz and Michael Day. Originally, I had thought of assessment as a way of evaluating student progress for grading purposes. Hurwitz and Day defined the various terms of assessment in ways that helped me better understand assessment as a tool for improving instruction, increasing the interest and motivational levels of students, and providing ongoing feedback to both the teacher and student on student progress. The most important descriptions for me were that formative assessments “occur during the period in which creation of art products occurs” and summative assessments “are conducted after completion of the creative process or activity.” This made it easier for me to understand these terms as they relate specifically to art. The explanations showed me that summative assessments are limited because they don’t give me feedback about the thought processes or creative experimentation involved in creating the artwork, which is so important to the development of children as artists.

Hurwitz and Day also pointed out that using multiple forms of assessment provides a more comprehensive picture of what students know than any single assessment does, offering examples of a variety of assessment tools such as observation, questionnaire, test, essay, visual identification, and portfolio. I was also pleased with the suggestion of a checklist. I am always concerned that my oral questioning does not provide me with information from all students. Hurwitz and Day suggest keeping a list of students handy and as they respond, check off their name so you can encourage responses from those who are not participating. This information solidified my belief that assessment needs to be an integral part of my instruction rather than an end of the unit single evaluation, in order to provide me with the feedback I need to help my students master their goals. Diverse and comprehensive assessments can guarantee that students who do not exhibit a strong ability in the production of art can still succeed.

Other resources provided specific ideas for the types of assessments I could develop. *Assessment In Art Education*, by Donna Kay Beattie, gave an example of a circle graph rating scale. The shape of this scale was particularly interesting and I thought that it might fit perfectly with the lesson on weaving. After all, art is visual and there is no reason why assessment can’t be visually appealing as well!

Beattie also discussed keeping a teacher log that is useful for profiling student attitudes and work habits in a quick and easy way. This could not only provide the teacher with helpful information about each student's progress but could provide the students with feedback about areas of weakness and strength. Likewise, students can keep their own log or journal.

Next, I reviewed a book our staff read for professional development, *The First Days of School: How to Be An Effective Teacher* by Harry and Rosemary Wong. I recalled information specific to art that I found interesting. Wong and Wong felt that rather using the term rubric, you should have a “scoring guide” because it is clear and students will know what is expected of them to earn a score. I would be able to display samples of completed art work that represented various stages of development. Students would rate

the works on a scoring guide of 4, 3, 2, 1 using art terms to describe the art work. Having these samples displayed throughout lessons, would allow students to check their work against the scored samples. *Grading Art* by Marvin Bartel suggested that teams help students become successful when starting out with new forms of assessment. Once they gain confidence working in groups, they will be more successful with self-assessment. More importantly though, I gained a better understanding about how art should be assessed longitudinally (on growth and improvement) at the elementary level. Using a variety of both formative and summative assessments will provide data on all aspects of the students' development. Finally, I did some research online about a program called *Visual Thinking Strategies* (VTS) developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenowine. VTS improves critical thinking and language skills through discussions of visual images. It is a simple procedure where students are shown an image and the teacher then asks "what is going on in this picture?" followed by "what do you see that makes you say that?" and finally "what more can we find?" One of the suggested uses for this program was as a form of pre-assessment, so I thought it would be a great place to begin.

I used the VTS program to look at images of cultural art forms. The students were very engaged and I discovered that they knew more about Native American Art than art from other cultures. Since every student participated in the VTS process, I knew it was an accurate representation of what they knew. This was helpful in determining where to begin my unit because the students showed a great deal of knowledge about Native American art and I wanted them to be able to begin with something familiar and build on their knowledge base from there. I was very energized after this process because it was the best discussion about artwork that this group has had. Students were using art terms to describe the work and giving opinions with specific evidence about the art work. Having this tool for pre-assessing student knowledge of a given art form kept me from trying to provide instruction on something they are already familiar with, so that I could move on to new information.

This was a good time to employ the strategy from *Assessment in Art Education* of having the students keep a journal to write down art terms, ideas, and areas where they struggled or succeeded. Each week I read their entries to see if there were areas that I needed to reteach, or students who needed extra help. This process helped me discover that two of my students were having a great deal of trouble with the circular shape of the weaving and once we changed their projects to rectangular shapes they had great success. This is information I would have missed without the journals. I used the idea of the circle graph from this resource book as well. When I had been doing my research and came across the circle graph picture it prompted me to choose the shape of the weaving project. When I gave my final assessment for this lesson, I used the circle graph as the starting point, and added multiple choice questions, fill in the blank, and short answer. The open ended questions were useful for eliciting information that I would not have gathered on an assessment that required only correct answers. I was pleased with the results of both the weavings and the written assessments. The results from the written assessment showed me that all 37 students were successful in answering everything except for the two multiple choice questions about the weaving terms. Only 19 of the students answered these correctly. These terms are very similar and hard to remember; based on this assessment information, I chose to review them during the time I ask questions to earn marbles. Reviewing them this way weekly would be far more beneficial than another whole lesson designed to re-teach these terms.

The unit continued with a project about the celebration of "The Day of The Dead." This is always a favorite lesson for fifth graders, but the final results are not always as detailed as I would like. I decided to use the idea of a scoring guide, as mentioned earlier from *The First Days of School: How to Be An Effective Teacher*. I presented students with 4 examples of sugar skulls at various stages of development. They ranked them in order from most detailed to least and assigned them descriptions. I have two classes, so I repeated this process giving each group total buy-in. The skulls remained out as references while they worked. This is a lesson where I read about "The Day of the Dead" as students work and I ask questions as we go. I decided to

try the checklist idea from *Children and Their Art: Methods For The Elementary School*. As I asked questions, I placed checks next to each student who answered and I encouraged other students to participate. This ensured that each student was part of the process and showed me that they were actively engaged in learning about this cultural celebration.

“The Art Beyond Borders Exhibit” came next and was an introduction to looking at art in a formal museum setting. Students were going to answer questions about the artwork using the elements of design, and based on Bartel's suggestion of using teams; I thought they would have more success in small groups. I chose the groups ahead of time based on my existing knowledge of the students’ strengths and weaknesses, both academically and behaviorally, for optimal success of each group. I wanted a professional opinion of how these assessments worked, so I scheduled an observation by my mentor. My intent was to try two different formats and see which was more successful. One group had a short amount of time to write and quite a bit of time for group discussion. The VTS process I had been using seemed to energize them and this time the discussions were student driven and amazing. They were able to make connections, describe the work using appropriate art terms, and pushed each other in directions above what I expected. Their writing, however, was not nearly up to expectations even though I had used sentence starters to prompt what they wrote about the elements of design. The second group had more time to write and less for discussion. They had more information written but it was not descriptive, and because they did not have enough time for a good discussion I missed out on hearing the thoughts they were unable to share in writing. Having my mentor in the room was valuable because we could share what we heard the groups discussing amongst themselves and both of us agreed that the student discourse was much more valuable in terms of assessing student knowledge than the written assessments. There seemed to be a disconnect between the groups’ ability to write and share orally. If I had relied only on writing, I would have missed most of what my students were capable of sharing and come to an inaccurate conclusion about their abilities to formally critique art. This supported the idea that having multiple forms of assessment provided my students with alternative ways of demonstrating their knowledge.

The above mentioned growth in my students' ability to discuss art was only one noticeable change that came from these varied assessments. During “The Day of the Dead” lesson I noticed that not only were students assessing their own work based on the scoring guide, but they were instructing their classmates on things they could do to make their skulls look more like the number 4. This led to better quality artwork from the students. They are no longer providing a rubric score just to get a good grade as they were before I began this module, but are using alternative ways to demonstrate their knowledge. The use of circle graphs, multiple choice and short answer questions, journals, VTS discussions, and group critiques has helped them gain self confidence as is evidenced by the increase in class participation during discussion and questioning. This positive change in my students was perhaps the biggest success of this module.

I considered this a successful and positive professional learning experience. The use of multiple forms of formative and summative assessment directly aligned with the lesson objectives provided me with valuable data. I used this data for planning future lessons, measuring knowledge and skills, and helping me differentiate instruction to meet a variety of student needs. I will continue to use what I have learned and put all of this together in a meaningful way for the art curriculum. Bartel stated that portfolios are a good tool for gathering information, and this led me to think about using this module as the starting point for creating student portfolios. I will use photos of completed artwork along with sketches, journal entries, and any written assessments given throughout the year to create portfolios for teacher and student feedback. This has given me direction for developing my professional goal for next year. I will next focus on indicator 4 of the CCT Performance Profile. I will use the information I have learned to provide students with assessment criteria and individualized, descriptive feedback to help them improve their performance and assume responsibility for their learning.