



Gratitude, Grit, & Growth:

Making Art, Defining Character

Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation Visual Arts Curriculum Guide SY 2014-15

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Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation is uniquely poised to affect great change in the youth of New York City. It is our challenge to prepare the children under our care for future success. In “The Arts and Prosocial Impact Study: Program Characteristics and Prosocial Effects” (1998) the research identifies serious art instruction as a necessary condition for effecting prosocial change in children in afterschool settings.

Through our afterschool arts activities SASF aims to do just that. Among the list of goals we have set for ourselves is to develop positive character through skill-building activities. Research shows that character traits like gratitude and grit when nurtured have a significant impact on quality of life, fulfillment and happiness. We will achieve this through dialogue, reflection, and thoughtful artmaking.

Curiosity & Exploration

Curiosity is the desire to learn or know more about something or someone. To have an open mind is to demonstrate receptiveness to new and unusual ideas. A curious child is eager to explore new things, asks questions without fear, and is engaged in learning. It is our ambition to encourage this mindset in our students through exploring and creating. Art exploration is a way to activate imagination in our youth and may, as Emily Dickinson wrote, “light the slow fuse of possibility”.

Guided exploration of art materials also provides a framework for students to develop skills for making art in a personally relevant way. In the visual arts classroom where exploration is welcome, students are encouraged to play, experiment, express, and develop a visual language through art materials. Art activities that encourage exploration in a wide variety of materials will nurture curiosity, open-mindedness and imagination in our young artists.

Growth & Practice

Every person has a mindset, a particular way of thinking. Through decades of research on achievement, Dr. Carol S. Dweck has made the discovery that “the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life. It can determine whether you become the person you want to be and whether you can accomplish the things you value.” She has identified two opposing mindsets. A fixed mindset, in which one believes personal qualities are carved in stone, manifests as the belief that you are limited by your current ability, intelligence, and skillset. The belief that the personal qualities you currently possess are a jumping off point for future advancement is called a growth mindset; this is a quality engaged, hard-working, life-long learners possess.

Many people develop a fixed mindset at a young age and throughout life through well-intentioned family and teachers. Teaching a child that they can grow as they learn is setting them on a path to achieving their goals through dedicated practice and effort. In the art studio where product is secondary to process, and where focus and sincere effort rewarded, students are practicing a growth mindset. It is the role of the instructor to foster this development through encouragement and praise directed at practice, hard-work, and an emphasis on the process of learning over natural abilities and results.

Grit & Artistic Development

Grit, defined as courage, resolve, and strength of character, is a quality we are striving to inspire and develop in our students. Having grit means to follow through and stick to a challenge despite adversity, to work hard despite opposition or previous failure, and to persevere with passion over an extended period of time to achieve a goal. In their paper, “Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals”, Dr. Angela Duckworth and Dr. Chris Peterson hypothesize that grit is an essential quality for high achievement.

Our students will practice a rigorous study of visual arts disciplines, respond to art made by others, and hone their skills in the presentation of their personal thoughts and ideas through visual language. Through art activities that push the participants to practice a variety of techniques, mediums, and genres we aim to cultivate grit in our young artists.

Gratitude & Inquiry

Gratitude is the quality of being thankful. A grateful person can be identified by a readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. Studies show that children and adolescents who practice gratitude are more engaged in school and their communities, have a greater sense of purpose, and take better care of their health. Furthermore, evidence shows that one’s gratefulness is directly connected to one’s ability to feel happiness in life. Supported by this knowledge we propose to make gratitude a central theme of our art program.

Documenting what we are thankful for is the easiest method to develop gratitude; journaling, chronicling, listing, reflecting and describing what we might be grateful about. These people, places, things, ideas, and emotions of thankfulness and gratitude are to be a central theme and subject of our visual arts curriculum. The challenge for our art students will be to use visual language to express these concepts and feelings.

Our instructors will guide the process through posing questions and assignments that spark dialogue, conversation, and thoughtful journaling amongst our students. This process of inquiry and response will point the students to consider the many ways in which they are grateful. The answers to the questions will become the subject-matter represented in the art making. The works of art become the outlet for our students to express their gratitude. The products of this classroom model will be a collection of deeply personal and individual artworks.

Goals and Learning Outcomes

- Provide a platform for self-investigation and self-expression through a safe afterschool environment
- Activate imagination, curiosity, and inventiveness through guided art material exploration
- Cultivate grit, passion, and perseverance through rigorous and serious art instruction
- Practice a purposeful appreciation of life through art making
- Focus on process and growth through motivated purposeful art practice

Program Structure

The SASF Visual Arts activities follow the guidelines, standards and structure outlined by this curriculum, as well as any additional requirements identified on the school site level. The program runs a three season model, i.e. 12 week cycles. The specific weekly and daily activity schedule is defined by the After-School Program Director.

In the Visual Arts Department each new season will coincide with a new curriculum unit. Each unit will explore another aspect of the curriculum theme and ask a new set of essential questions in support of that theme. Each

seasonal thematic unit will consist of a combination of lessons that practice the four artistic processes as outlined in the new National Core Arts Standards: Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting.

Developmental Considerations

A primary goal of this program is student involvement and authenticity; developmentally appropriate lessons are the means to that end. Each activity lesson plan will begin with learning objectives designed according to the developmental level of the students being taught. The stages of artistic development in children are useful to define as a tool to inform teaching but should not be considered educational goals.

SASF serves students ranging from Kindergarten through twelfth grade, which means across the program there will be a great range of learning targets, lesson variety, and artwork produced. In addition to the guidelines in this curriculum the visual arts activity specialists are encouraged to consult the NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Visual Arts for age-appropriate lesson planning guidelines.

Assessment

Student Growth and Learning

The SASF young artists will not be graded on their activities. The primary assessment of the students' learning will be formative, meaning it will be ongoing within the process of teaching. These assessments will be executed with observations of the students' progress, physical reactions to material, and participation in classroom discussion. These assessments will involve talking with the students and listening to what they have to say about their projects. The cumulative body of student artwork will serve as the concrete evidence of student growth and learning.

All students will keep a Process Journal for making connections through reflection and writing. The teaching artists will guide this process through questions, writing prompts, and assignments. The use of these journals provide additional opportunities for critical thinking, problem solving, and developmental literacy skills.

Reflective Teaching

All teaching artists are expected to be reflective in their teaching practices; each of our Visual Arts Activity Specialists also will keep a Process Journal for planning, assessing and reflecting. They will each be instructed to continually observe and assess how the teaching is fitting the needs and abilities of students during the activities and will be mentored on how it can be adjusted and improved. All Art Specialists will be in contact with the Visual Arts Coordinators for support and guidance throughout the school year.

Program Assessment

The Visual Arts Coordinators will visit each site for observations at least twice per school year; site visits will assess teaching strategies, classroom behavior, and student learning. These visits are opportunities to review the practical application of this guide; discuss challenges in the program implementation; observe student receptiveness to the ideas and theme; provide support to site staff in the form of individual critique, recommendations, and professional development.

Unit and Lesson Plan Guidelines

Each of the following Art Making Units outlines the theme and sample activities for each. It does not outline the specific lessons necessary nor does it specify which art materials must be used. The activity suggestions in this document are included for inspiration and guidance. The teaching artists are expected to design a sequence of lessons that connects with their students in a developmentally appropriate and thoughtful way. This is a

multi-disciplinary curriculum and the expectation is that each site's visual arts activity will align with the plan and seasonal Units; these Units are equally applicable to painting, drawing, and sculpture as they are to filmmaking or photography.

Within each 12-week cycle it is the responsibility of the Art Specialists to plan for their classroom 2-3 major art projects based on the unit theme and learning objectives. Each lesson sequence must include:

- Non-representational art making lessons with art material exploration and play as a primary goal
- Experimentation with multiple art techniques with the goal of acquiring and refining skills
- Sequential lessons planned to develop one big idea through multiple activities
- Learning opportunities to observe and discuss professional, historic, and student artworks
- Weekly writing and reflecting in the process journals to synthesize knowledge and personal experiences

Making Art, Defining Character

Through the processes of exploration with art materials and self-expression with visual language we offer our students an opportunity to develop their values and positive character. Character is defined as a person's disposition to think, feel, and act in ways that help oneself and others. It is the task of our art specialists to guide our young artists down this path of identity investigation. Furthermore, it is the role of the teacher to model through action and instruction how to cultivate positive qualities of character.

The three Units approach self-expression and identity through:

- Unit 1. Representational and non-representational works of art that express emotions and feelings
- Unit 2. Artwork that depicts the people, places, and things that we value and are thankful for
- Unit 3. Imaginative creations that express goals, hopes, and dreams for the future

Unit 1: Sharing Feelings

The first unit will explore a spectrum of emotions from the students perspective. Through ongoing teacher led conversations about the emotions students feel, the triggers for certain emotions, and ways of coping with negative or undesirable emotions, students will begin to develop a greater awareness about their emotional selves. Art making activities and explorations will be selected and designed to guide the students through a process of growth.

Once a week students will briefly describe in the Process Journal one challenge they faced in the art activity, such as a difficult new material, or an idea that they did not understand. They will be asked to reflect on how they overcome that challenge. The art specialists will assist with writing prompts, and answering questions as they arise.

Sample Lesson Activities

1. **Painting Emotions**: Through the exploration of the qualities of paint (color, texture, fluidity) and the use of handmade brushes using unusual materials (sponge, string, feather, plastic, foam, branches, leaves, etc.) students will learn that these qualities can be selected and combined to express feeling and emotion. Handmade brushes can be made using wooden clothesline pins to hold a variety of found and recycled materials. These brushes will be used to experiment with novel mark making with paint. Students will be offered large sheets of paper, invited to paint on the floor, and encouraged to move and make expressive gestural marks and lines. This lesson can be modified and enhanced by the addition of music for inspiration.

2. Outside and Inside Masks/Vessels: By exploring concepts of public vs. private identities students will learn that opposing aspects of themselves can be expressed visually. Students will be asked to depict their public persona on the front or outside of an object and their private secret aspects of themselves on the back or inside. Depending on the student group and desired results, sample materials for the objects could be paper, recycled objects, paper mache, bags, or clay. Paint, markers and mixed media collage are some effective materials to illustrate the emotions on the outside and inside of the objects.
3. Coping Cards: By visualizing uplifting and inspirational messages students will learn that visual language can be used to trade negative self-talk and emotions for healthier replacements. Students will be asked to privately list all the negative emotions they think and experience in one week. They will then brainstorm imagery and inspirational words that they believe will help them replace the negative with positive. The cards can be made using cardstock, oak tag, or recycled playing cards. The cards should be small in scale and are intended to be personal items to keep for times of need. The imagery and messages can be created using crayons, marker, paint, mixed media collage, etc. Students and teachers can decide to tie or bind the cards together and/or to create a bag or container to keep them safe.

Unit 2: Giving Thanks

In unit two our students and staff will practice the art of gratitude. The purpose of this unit is to establish healthy habits of positive reflection. Through reflection on the people, opportunities, achievements, places, and things of personal value our students will be challenged to identify thankfulness and appreciation. Through their art making students will be asked to recognize these feelings of gratitude and represent them with visual language.

Students will be asked to list in their Process Journals three new ways in which they are grateful at least once a week. Through classroom dialogue students will also be asked to share their ideas with each other. While in the process of art making students should be encouraged to use these lists as inspiration for their art activities.

Sample Lesson Activities

1. Favorite Part of Me: By reflecting on a part of their body they feel especially grateful for, students will be associating their body and themselves with positive and empowering thoughts. Students will first be asked to consider the countless ways their body serves and works for them, then they are to choose one “favorite” part and write a short paragraph explaining why this body part is so important to them. Students will pair this writing with an image of their chosen body part. Depending upon age and available materials, the images may be photographs, drawings, paintings, or collages.
2. The Gift of Art: In this sequence the youth will identify the people in their lives they are most grateful for (e.g. family, friends, teachers, role models) and will create a series of artworks as tokens of their appreciation. Led by the teacher they will discuss who these people are and generate ideas as a group. The students will continue to reflect through journaling prompts and sketching activities defining what makes their loved ones special. After exploring in their Process Journals students will select three individuals to express their gratitude. Based on their appreciation and new understanding of ways of giving the students will create one artwork gift for each person. The artworks will be small in scale and scope, intimate representations of gratitude, inspired by the loved ones and role models they are intended for. This lesson will work best as a choice-based lesson where children are allowed a variety of art media to choose from, preferably materials

they have previous experience with. Some sample projects include a portrait or illustration of the loved one in an act of kindness, an abstract painting expressing the positive emotions the two share, or a representation of a physical gift the student would like their benefactor to have.

3. **Safe Havens:** By creating a safe and happy space within a box, students will explore their personal ideas of inner solace, gratitude, and peace. Concepts of space, color, light and shadow will also be explored. This project functions as both an opportunity for students to think about what kinds of places make them feel happy and safe, as well as a medium through which they can practice working with visual concepts of space, color, light and shadow. Students can choose to represent an actual place or moment from memory where they have felt safe or they can choose to invent an ideal space that combines qualities from many moments and places that provide these feelings. For this lesson each child will need a shoe or cereal box. The boxes will serve as the base for the sculptural building. Recycled materials, clay, paint, cardboard, cardstock, paper, are all relevant and useful materials for the creation of these miniature safe havens. The teacher may choose to limit all students to the use of one or two materials or open the class to the choice from a “buffet” of art supplies.

Unit 3: Developing Purpose

In unit three students will continue to look inward but they will also be asked to look forward towards their future. Having grit means not only working hard, it is also working with a purpose. Through a series of lessons geared at goal setting, imagining future success, and defining the skills and mindsets necessary to achieve, students will begin the process of finding their own passions. By beginning to think about their futures in positive and concrete ways, students will be more strongly equipped to make life decisions both large and small, as well as take constructive steps towards building the life they envision.

Journaling exercises will focus on various methods of visualizing future success and the many ways in which these successes can be measured and valued. Along with journaling, students will also be encouraged to share their ideas in guided discussion. The following activities all work best when preceded by thoughtful journaling and classroom conversation.

Sample Lesson Activities

1. **Portrait of the Artist as Warrior:** One definition of a warrior is “a person who shows or has shown great vigor, courage, or aggressiveness.” These are the qualities that help someone to succeed or be victorious when pursuing a goal. By identifying a goal, what they will need to achieve this goal, and creating a visual representation of themselves as a warrior actively tackling this goal, students will gain a new understanding of how to realize their aspirations. This exercise also encourages confidence and builds self esteem. Students will create an image of themselves as a warrior and the tools, skills, or weapons they will need to be successful. Some examples of this type of artwork can be found when looking at the religious iconography of the Himalayas, Europe, and Ancient Egypt, as well as popular Superhero comics and animation.
2. **Future Fairy Tales:** Fairy Tales depict familiar aspects of the human experience, common themes are love, jealousy, fear, and kindness. Through the study of one fairy tale, students will explore the themes and characters of the story. By asking students to look closely at the motivation and experience of each character, students will be encouraged to empathize with the different sides of a conflict. Students will then take this empathy one step further by actually placing themselves into the story, either as a new form of an existing

character, or a completely new character altogether. Students will first journal about their fairy tale and how they will work themselves into the story. The journaling may be in the form of sketches, storyboards, or notes. The final project will be a visual re-working of the fairy tale, which may come in the form of a picture book, comic strip, slide show, film or other medium that suits the desired visual representation.

3. Past Present Future Self: Artists represent themselves in their art in different ways. By choosing a way to represent an aspect of their past, present, and future, students will create a triptych that explores, appreciates, and connects these different parts of themselves as well as practice a form of portraiture. The past, present, and future self may take the form of a literal self portrait of the face or different part of the body, or the student may choose to represent themselves through defining objects. It would be helpful for students to begin this project with journaling about their past, present, and future self, describing what objects, emotions, and visual strategies might be employed. One journaling exercise can ask students to write letters from or to their past and future selves. Another journaling exercise is for students to visualize their life as a road and to draw representations of different aspects of themselves along the road of their life. Final projects can be done through drawing, painting, collage, or sculpture.

Creating, Presenting, Responding, Connecting

The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) has developed and has recently released a final draft of the Next Generation National Visual Arts Standards. These standards are a culmination of years of research and work by hundreds of educators throughout the country to define artistic literacy, identify applicable creative processes and practices, and ask essential questions to articulate value and meaning in the arts. NCCAS has divided the artistic practices into four categories: Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting.

<u>Creating:</u>	Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work
<u>Presenting:</u>	Interpreting and sharing artistic work
<u>Responding:</u>	Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning
<u>Connecting:</u>	Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context

These practices are the cognitive and physical actions by which arts learning and making are realized. Each of our curriculum Units addresses these processes in some manner. Each unit will contain a variety of opportunities for each through the following program elements: curriculum-based artmaking activities, sharing artwork, cultural events and museum trips, and journaling.

Visual Arts Activities

Through our Unit structure this curriculum has defined three approaches to character development through art making. Each unit theme will address these character traits directly. It is the responsibility of the art activity specialists to design a sequence of lessons inspired by the theme and lesson samples and follow the suggestions in this guide. A backwards design approach is recommended for planning a successful sequence; instructors should first identify important outcomes for learning and offer activities that provide opportunities for those results. Each art making sequence is expected to include socratic/inquiry-based dialogue, exploration lessons, skill-building opportunities, and variety of media and technique.

Sharing Artwork

Artists choose to exhibit their art in different ways, reflecting a variety of concepts and ideas. Classroom activities will direct students to analyze the many ways in which art is presented and the value in sharing works of art. When students share their artwork, it also gives them the opportunity to meditate on their art and on themselves as artists. Students will be encouraged to write artists' statements and to respond constructively to the artwork of their peers.

Students will help curate their own pieces to be exhibited and may even help in designing the exhibition space. Exhibitions can be as simple as laying pieces of artwork out on the classroom table or hanging work on a school bulletin board. Student art will also be formally presented in teacher coordinated school gymnasium exhibitions, at the Annual SASF Spring Showcase, in specially designated galleries in NYC, as well as in our new Street Art for Schools program.

Cultural Events and Museum Field Trips

When it comes to art and culture, it's difficult to find a location with more to offer. New York City provides a breathtaking array of artistic and cultural experiences. With no shortage of opportunities, it is our job to curate these experiences, making sure our students are exposed to those most enriching and developmentally appropriate. The visual arts coordinators have ongoing relationships with museums across the city and will assist in organizing trips throughout the school year. Additionally, there will be the 2nd Annual *SASF Art Day* at which students will be given the opportunity to engage in exciting and meaningful collaborative art making activities on a large scale.

Process Journal: Drawing & Writing Exercises

The Process Journal is at the core of the SASF Visual Arts Curriculum. Students are accustomed to expressing themselves through language and although visual language is a powerful tool, it takes practice to learn how to express oneself in this way. The Process Journal works to bridge this gap while challenging students to explore themes of personal growth.

The Process Journals are personal yet not private. This is an important distinction to make, while the journals must be viewed as a safe and comfortable space within which students can feel free, they are not to be taken out of the classroom and they will be looked at by the visual arts specialist. All lesson plans will include ways of incorporating the journal into the class and into visual arts projects. A simple routine to begin class is with an activity, question, or prompt that utilizes the process journal, or alternatively as a closing ritual in response to the lesson or process. Our goal is for the students to develop a greater level of comfort expressing and exploring using their journal as their tool.