

Workshop 3

Addressing the Diverse Needs of Students

Arts teachers face a broad diversity of learners in their classrooms every day. Students come into the classroom with a wide range of experiences and skills in the art form. They come from different cultural and economic backgrounds. They come with different learning styles. Some come with special needs.

Successful high school arts teachers address the diverse needs of their students by:

- Recognizing the unique talents and skills of each student
- Responding to different learning styles
- Acknowledging cultural and economic diversity
- Adapting instruction for students with special challenges

Learning Goals

The goals of this workshop session are for you to:

- Identify ways you can adapt your teaching to reach a broader range of learning styles among your students
- Plan adjustments in your teaching to anticipate the needs of students with disabilities
- Identify the hallmarks of culturally responsive teaching and how they can be applied in an arts context

Web Interactive

Try the Interactive feature “Focus On Culturally Responsive Teaching” for an introduction to this approach to student diversity, as seen in a playwriting class. Alternatively, use the Interactive after you have watched the program, to reinforce your understanding of the concept. You can find the Interactive on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/hsarts/program3/.

Workshop Session (On Site)

Getting Ready (15 minutes)

Read the following statements about diversity.

To adequately attend to cultural diversity in the classroom, teachers must look first at their own cultural background and understand how their biases affect their interactions with students. Then, teachers can examine the backgrounds and needs of the student population and understand their students' cultural biases as well. Classroom instruction can be designed to connect the content of a course with students' backgrounds.

Center for Adolescent Studies
<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/tt/v2i2/cultural.html>

"Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common."

Discuss what diversity means to you, your classroom, and your curriculum.

- What kinds of diversity do you find in your classroom?
- How does your arts curriculum address historical and contemporary world cultures, and how does this relate to the cultural background of your students?

Watching the Program (60 minutes)

The information sheets found at the end of this chapter provide helpful background on the schools, arts programs, and individual classes featured in each segment.

Consider the following questions as you watch the program. You may stop the video after each segment to discuss the questions with your colleagues.

Theatre: Stephen DiMenna [Playwriting]

- What specific strategies did Stephen use to engage shy students? Inattentive students? Reluctant writers?
- How do you encourage students to draw on their own experiences?

Visual Art: Jan Wilson and Bonnie Cusack [Special Needs and Honors Students]

- How did Jan construct this lesson so that both groups of students benefited from the experience?
- How do you adapt your instruction to accommodate students' learning styles and special needs?

Music: Carmen Laboy [General Music Class/Intermediate Band/Concert Band]

- Across the three classes, in what ways does Carmen change her teaching approach, and in what ways does she remain consistent?
- How does your program provide for varying levels of interest and talent among your students?

Dance: Mary Harding and Tom Kanthak [Dance for Non-Majors]

- How did Mary and Tom tap into their students' learning styles to help them understand and enjoy work in the dance studio?
- How do you take advantage of the different learning styles in your classroom?

Workshop Session (On Site), cont'd.

Activities and Discussion (45 minutes)

Part I: Learning Styles and Teaching Methods (25 minutes)

Read the following passage about learning styles:

Students take in and process information in different ways: by seeing and hearing, reflecting and acting, reasoning logically and intuitively, analyzing and visualizing steadily and sporadically. Teaching methods also vary. Some teachers lecture, others demonstrate or lead students to self-discovery; some focus on principles and others on applications; some emphasize memory and others understanding.

The idea is not to teach each student exclusively according to his or her preferences, but rather to strive for a balance of instructional methods. If the balance is achieved, students will be taught partly in a manner they prefer, which leads to an increased comfort level and willingness to learn, and partly in a less preferred manner, which provides practice and feedback in ways of thinking and solving problems which they may not initially be comfortable with but which they will have to use to be fully effective professionals.

From "Learning Styles" by Richard M. Felder
http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Learning_Styles.html

Use the *Learning Styles and the Arts Worksheet* on the following page to chart connections between your arts curriculum and students' different learning styles.

Learning Styles and the Arts Worksheet

The boxes already filled in represent some of the most obvious fits between art forms and learning styles. Go down the list for your art form, and identify places in your curriculum where you address the less obvious learning styles—or where you might try to do so.

Learning Styles and the Arts *

	Dance	Music	Theatre	Visual Art
Visual	<i>Visual learners better understand what they see.</i>			
		Reading music		Painting
Verbal	<i>Verbal learners get more out of written and spoken words.</i>			
Auditory			Acting	
Sequential	<i>Sequential learners gain understanding in linear steps, which follow logically from the previous one.</i>			
	Dancing patterns			
Global	<i>Global learners learn in large jumps, absorbing material without seeing many connections, and then suddenly "getting it."</i>			
				Analyzing artworks
Sensing	<i>Sensing learners like learning facts and solving problems by well-established methods.</i>			
		Reading and playing music		
Intuitive	<i>Intuitive learners prefer discovering possibilities and relationships.</i>			
			Improvising	
Kinesthetic	<i>Kinesthetic learners retain and understand information best by doing something active with it.</i>			
Tactile	Dancing			
Reflective	<i>Reflective learners prefer to think about things quietly.</i>			
			Writing a play	

* Developed from "Learning Styles and Strategies" by Richard M. Felder and Barbara A. Soloman
<http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/ILSdir/styles.htm>

As a group, discuss which learning styles you think are easiest to address, and which are hardest to address. See if by sharing strategies across art forms, participants can gain a larger repertoire for addressing challenging learning styles.

Workshop Session (On Site), cont'd.

Part II: Accommodating Students With Special Needs (20 minutes)

Read and discuss the following passages about the arts and disabilities:

Marcel Proust wrote: "Only through art can we emerge from ourselves and know what another person sees." When we see art as the universal language that has the ability to unite all people, we understand the importance it has in the lives of people with disabilities. For a person who cannot speak, a dance performance may clearly communicate even the most complicated message. For a person with a mental disability who cannot communicate effectively through words, a painting rich with color and life may say more than verbal sentences ever could. And, for a person who has limited mobility, a song sung with emotion and spirit may elicit movement toward a state of clarity and joy. By engaging in the arts, people with disabilities are able to contribute to our workplaces and communities, help extinguish old stereotypes regarding disability, and create a global culture truly representative of all people.

*From Access and Opportunities: A Guide to Disability Awareness—
Value of the Arts to People with Disabilities, VSA Arts*

All students deserve access to the rich education and understanding that the arts provide, regardless of their background, talents, or disabilities. In particular, students with disabilities, who are often excluded from arts programs, can derive great benefit from them for the same reasons that studying the arts benefits students who are not disabled. As in any area of the curriculum, providing a sound education in the arts depends in great measure on creating access to opportunities and resources.

From National Standards for Arts Education. Copyright © 1994 by Music Educators National Conference (MENC). Used by permission. The complete National Arts Standards and additional materials relating to the Standards are available from MENC—The National Association for Music Education, 1806 Robert Fulton Drive, Reston, VA 20191.

Use the *Special Needs and the Arts Worksheet* on the following page to discuss how your arts program provides access and opportunities for students with special challenges.

Between Sessions (On Your Own)

Homework

In your journal, describe the students you are teaching right now—their life experiences, the cultural and linguistic backgrounds they draw on, the learning strengths and challenges they present, their disabilities if they have any. If it helps you think more concretely, describe three students who vary along these dimensions.

Then reflect on these questions:

- How do you describe your teaching style, and what sorts of learners does it favor?
- What do you do to “bend” your style toward students who learn in different ways?
- If you see some of your students five years from now, what do you want them to retain from what you taught them?

Web Interactive

As a follow-up to the workshop session, try the Web Interactive “Focus On Culturally Responsive Teaching.” Use it to analyze how a visiting theatre artist takes account of the diverse needs of his students. The Interactive can be found on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/hsarts/program3/index.html.

Program 3: Addressing the Diverse Needs of Students **Theatre**

SEGMENT 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Stephen DiMenna **John Loonam**
27 years teaching 20 years teaching

About the School

**Bayard Rustin High School
for the Humanities**
New York, NY

Type:
Urban/Comprehensive

Grades:
9-12
Students:
2,400
Low/Middle socio-economic status

Arts Requirement:
New York has a 1-credit art or music graduation requirement (180 minutes of instruction per week for one year)

About the Residency Program

Faculty:
2 (1 teacher and 1 teaching artist)

Organization:
Theatre Development Fund's Residency Arts Project (RAP).

Funding:
The residency and the actors are paid for by the Theatre Development Fund. The school matches one third of the funding.

Institutionalization:
Since filming took place, the Creative Writing Program has expanded, with the continued participation of Stephen DiMenna. It is now a Learning Community within Bayard Rustin High School, called The Institute for Media and Writing.

About the Featured Class

Creative Writing Course:

Ninth-graders learn the fundamentals of playwriting through a yearlong residency involving 16 visits by a teaching artist per semester. Students work on writing a one-act play, which professional actors perform at the end of each semester.

Students focus on developing their creative and expressive talents and work on building their communication skills.

Preparations/Prerequisites:

For this particular class, students must achieve a 3 (proficiency level) on the New York State eighth-grade ELA exam, which tests basic reading and writing skills.

Student Motivation:

Mixed. Each student is motivated by individual concerns, but common factors include a desire to go to college, an interest in creativity, and the excitement of drama and playwriting.

Student Level:

Mixed. Most students are novices, but there are a few who are surprisingly experienced in creative writing.

In the Teacher's Words

How does the residency experience introduce the concepts of playwriting?

Stephen DiMenna: The residency uses four phases to develop students' skills as playwrights:

- 1. Unlock students' creative voices*
- 2. Teach the form of playwriting*
- 3. Teach the structure of playwriting*
- 4. Explore content for the students' plays*

Jan Wilson
27 years teaching

Bonnie Cusack
28 years teaching

About the School

Nottingham High School
Hamilton, NJ

Type:
Suburban/Comprehensive

Grades:
9-12

Students:
1,450
Very mixed socio-economic status

Arts Requirement:
New Jersey has a 5-credit (one full year) graduation requirement in Visual Art, Music, Dance, or Theatre

About the Visual Art Program

Faculty:
2 full-time

Students:
220

Facilities:
Below Average in Area
• 1 full-time art studio
• 1 shared studio space

Required Courses:
Art Fundamentals or Advanced Fundamentals (first-year students working at an accelerated pace)

Elective Courses:
Drawing & Painting I, Advanced Drawing & Painting II, Sculpture & Ceramics, Mixed Media, Commercial Design & Illustration, and Honors Studio

About the Featured Class

Honors Studio:

Students work independently with a teacher/mentor to develop a portfolio that demonstrates both the depth and breadth of their experience and that explores history and aesthetics through problem solving.

Students work at various points throughout the year with a class of developmentally delayed students who have a wide range of disabilities, from communication or emotional difficulties to perceptual or neurological impairment.

Preparations/Prerequisites:

Eligible students are seniors who have completed Art Fundamentals and a minimum of two other offerings. Students must be able to work independently and complete a contracted body of work throughout the course year.

Student Motivation:

High

Student Level

Advanced

In the Teacher's Words

What benefits do you see for the special education students?

Jan Wilson: Many of these students have amazing ideas when it comes to art. They need an environment that will allow them to experiment without fear of failure. It is affirming for them to see themselves be successful. Several students planned to take the Fundamentals class this year as a result of their experience.

What benefits do you see for the honors students?

Jan Wilson: The honors students lose many of the stereotypes and labels often placed on special education students. They begin to understand the challenges faced by students with learning challenges. They have become supporters and even champions of these students in the school population.

Program 3: Addressing the Diverse Needs of Students

Music

SEGMENT 3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Carmen Laboy

20 years teaching

About the School

Christopher Columbus H.S.
Bronx, NY

Type:
Urban/Comprehensive

Grades:
9-12

Students:
4,000
Low/Middle socio-economic status

Arts Requirement:
New York has a 1-credit art or music requirement (180 minutes per week for one year)

About the Instrumental Music Program

Faculty:
1 full-time

Students:
175

Facilities:
Above Average in the Area
• Band room
• Instrument room
• Multipurpose auditorium

Required Courses:
None

Elective Courses:
Beginner Band, Intermediate Band, Concert Band, Jazz Band, and Pep Band

About the Featured Classes

General Music Appreciation :

Students study a little bit of everything, including musical instruments, composers and musical eras, and musical forms (opera, symphony, musicals).

Students in this class generally are not taking instrumental or vocal music.

Typical Subsequent Course:

Beginner Band

Student Motivation:

Mixed

Student Level:

Novice

In the Teacher's Words

What is your goal with the band program?

To have the students remain in the band program throughout school. If they're talented they are encouraged to play in college – sometimes they can get part of their tuition paid.

Intermediate Band:

Students who have been playing an instrument for a year or two in junior high or have completed one term in Beginner Band participate in this course.

Students may stay in this class for several terms.

Typical Subsequent Course:

Concert Band

Student Motivation:

High

Concert Band:

Students who have been playing an instrument for several years and are ready for an advanced band set-up join this group. Students can remain in Concert Band and play in Jazz Band at the same time.

Student Motivation:

High

Student Level:

Advanced





Program 3: Addressing the Diverse Needs of Students

Dance

SEGMENT 4 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mary Harding
14 years teaching

Tom Kanthak
28 years teaching

About the School

Arts High School
Perpich Center for Arts Education
Golden Valley, MN

Type:
Statewide residential program/
Arts-focused public high school

Grades:
11-12

Students:
300
Very mixed socio-economic status

Majors:
Dance, Literary Arts, Media Arts, Music,
Theatre, and Visual Art

About the Dance Program

Faculty:
2 full-time

Students:
20-30 dance majors + 75 non-majors

Facilities:
Above Average in the Area

- 1 large studio
- 2 locker rooms
- 120-seat black box theatre

Focus:
Modern dance-based ensemble program
that welcomes dancers with developed
talent as well as potential.

Required Courses:
Ballet Technique, Composition,
Improvisation, Dance History, Dance
Criticism, Career Explorations, Anatomy
and Somatics, Music for Dance,
Repertory, Guest Artist Residency,
Conditioning, Yoga, and Jazz

Elective Courses:
Modern Dance, Arts Improvisation, Arts
and Ideas, Moving Anatomy, Viewpoints
in Dance and Theatre, and Drumming

Audition:
Movement class, interview, and an arts-
oriented assignment. Prior to the
audition, each student is sent a list of 5
words and asked to bring in a new,
original artwork related to those words.
Dancers must present a short solo in any
style.

About the Featured Class

**Moving Anatomy
(for non-dance majors):**
Students explore human anatomy
through the lenses of Bartenieff
Fundamentals, improvisation, and
somatic studies. Students learn the
structure and function of the body
through movement exercises and
reflective writing.

Preparations/Prerequisites:
No prerequisites, though students
are majors in other art areas.

Student Motivation:
High

Student Level:
Mixed

In the Teacher's Words

***What are some of the
different learning styles you
see among your non-dance
majors?***

*Mary Harding: I see a larger
proportion of visual learners. The
theatre students tend to see
narrative in work and they are
highly verbal. In general, these
students sometimes are more
creative and open in improvisation
than the dance majors.*

Additional Resources

On the Web

General Sites

Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom

<http://bokcenter.fas.harvard.edu/docs/hotmoments.html>

Tips for teachers on turning difficult encounters on sensitive subjects into learning opportunities

Theatre Development Fund

<http://www.tdf.org/education/>

Select: *Residency Arts Project*

Information about the Theatre Development Fund's education programs

VSA Arts

<http://www.vsarts.org/>

Extensive resources for educators and artists, dedicated to helping people with disabilities learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts

School and Teacher Sites

Bayard Rustin High School for the Humanities

http://www.insideschools.org/fs/school_profile.php?id=954

Web site for the school where Stephen DiMenna works with John Loonam and his class on playwriting

Stephen DiMenna

<http://www.stephendimenna.com/>

Stephen DiMenna's Web site, including information about his directing and teaching

Nottingham High School

<http://www.hamilton.k12.nj.us/secondary/north1/>

Web site for visual art teacher Jan Wilson's school

Christopher Columbus High School

<http://www.columbushs.org/index2.html>

Web site for band teacher Carmen Laboy's school

Arts High School Dance Department, Perpich Center for Arts Education

<http://www.pcae.k12.mn.us/school/ahs.html>

Select: *Program Areas*, then *Dance*

Information on the dance department where Mary Harding and Tom Kanthak teach

In Print

Learning Styles

Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom, 2nd edition*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000. ISBN: 0871203766

Information and resources to help educators at all levels apply MI theory to curriculum development, lesson planning, assessment, special education, cognitive skills, educational technology, career development, and educational policy

Silver, Harvey, Strong, Richard, & Perini, Matthew. *So Each May Learn: Integrating Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000. ISBN: 0871203871

Ideas for implementing a holistic learning program that seamlessly integrates learning styles and multiple intelligences into instruction, curriculum, and assessment

Cultural Diversity

Davis, Barbara Gross. *Tools for Teaching*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993. ISBN: 1-55542-568-2

Classroom-tested strategies and suggestions to improve teaching practice, including responding to diversity and using technology

Wilson, August. *Fences*. Plume Books, 1995. ISBN: 0452264014

August Wilson's play about an African American man and his struggle to relate to his children and the changing world around him in late 1950s America.

Wlodkowski, Raymond J., & Ginsberg, Margery B. *Diversity and Motivation: Culturally Responsive Teaching*. John Wiley & Sons, 2003. ISBN: 0787967424

Real-world guidance and suggestions for successful teaching in today's changing classroom environment

Special Needs

Friend, Marilyn, & Bursuck, William D. *Including Students with Special Needs: A Practical Guide for Classroom Teachers, 3rd Edition*. Allyn & Bacon, 2001. ISBN: 0205331920

Emphasizes best practices for teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings