

Teaching Visual Art

Length: 30 minutes

Featured Schools

School:	Helen Street School
Location:	Hamden, Connecticut
In this program:	Pamela Mancini, visual art teacher
School:	Ridgeway Elementary School
Location:	White Plains, New York
In this program:	MaryFrances Perkins, visual art teacher

About This Program

Two visual art specialist teachers use contrasting interpretations of the human face to explore inquiry-based instruction and various techniques in visual art.

At **Helen Street School** in Hamden, Connecticut, visual art teacher Pamela Mancini uses portraits from different periods in history to help a fifth-grade class discover that there is more to a painting than meets the eye:

- In *Southern Belle*, a work by 19th-century German artist Erich Correns, students look at clothing, hairstyles, background, and other clues to learn more about the cultural context of the painting and its subject.
- Examining *Head of a Negro* by Peter Paul Rubens, students speculate about the strong emotions expressed in the eyes and other features of the 17th-century subject.

After examining the paintings, students draw original portraits, expressing information about their subjects through expression, clothing, background, technique, and other visual cues. They conclude the lesson by sharing their responses to each other's work.

"Visual art gives students a time to wind down and express themselves," says Mancini. "They have the freedom of making choices; they learn from making the decisions that they make. They learn to look at their work in a different way.... They can experience things that they can't experience anywhere else but in the art world because it gives them the freedom to explore and think and create and just go a step beyond."

At **Ridgeway Elementary School** in White Plains, New York, MaryFrances Perkins introduces mask-making to a second-grade art class. By making their own masks, students examine the concept of symmetry, study the vocabulary word for the day, and learn that masks are found in cultures throughout the world. Children identify common characteristics of masks, such as exaggerated features and decoration, and relate the shapes of eyes and noses to geometrical shapes they have learned.

Perkins purposely keeps the demonstration mask she makes very simple, so that the students will do their own work and not be tempted to copy her mask. "There is no right or wrong in art—what anyone does is great. Our word is 'awesome.' It's pleasing for me to see that they exchange ideas and that they are respectful," she says.

Perkins observes that students have grown more confident in their work throughout the year. "In September, they normally start out saying, 'I can't do it; would you please help me?' Now, all of them have grown. They are more willing to take a risk, take a chance and [know that] it's okay to make mistakes."

Arts Education Standards Addressed in This Program

Visual Art

- **Content Standard 1**—Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories
- **Content Standard 4**—Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places
- **Content Standard 5**—Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others
Achievement Standards for Grades K–4:
 - Understand there are different responses to specific artworks

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Viewing Suggestions

Who Should Watch This Program

Showcasing teaching practices and classroom management ideas from two experienced visual art specialists, “Teaching Visual Art” is a strong professional development tool for both classroom and specialist teachers.

Other audiences for this program might include:

- curriculum or arts project planners, to expand their ideas about integrating visual art into other subject areas and to demonstrate how art specialists apply standards to their curriculum;
- visiting artists or a local arts organization, to lead off a brainstorming session on collaborative visual art projects with your school; and
- school board members, parent groups, and potential funders, to demonstrate how visual art can be used to engage children, promote inquiry, and enhance learning in other academic subjects.

Before Watching

In this program, both classes are carefully planned and structured in their content and teaching practices. Mancini gives students clear and specific guidelines for creating their portraits. She keeps a detailed record of each lesson and maintains portfolios of each student’s work so she can assess their progress. Perkins aligns mask-making with academic subject matter, including vocabulary, social studies, and geometry. She and the students refer to a checklist posted on the ceiling to verify that they use all the space on the paper, work neatly, add detail, and follow instructions.

- Consider how planning and structure are important in a visual art class. How does order promote creativity?
- What are some other examples of how structure in these two classrooms impacts students’ work?

Watching the Program

Watch “Teaching Visual Art” (30 minutes).

Viewing Suggestions, cont'd.

Suggested Activities and Discussion

Consider the following questions for reflection:

- How can you use visual art to teach your students about history, math, science, and other art forms?
- What questions do you think are important for students to ask about works of visual art?
- How would you lead students into an investigation of the emotional qualities in a work of visual art?
- How could your students use an original work of art to express their own feelings?

Below are some additional ways you can build on the ideas in this program in a variety of school and community settings.

Professional Development Sessions for Teachers

- Consider ways you can incorporate visual art lessons in your class. How would you structure the class? What materials would you use, and where would you obtain them? What other subjects would you incorporate?
- Think of ways that visual art might address special needs of students in your classroom, for example, by bridging language barriers or developmental gaps, providing opportunities for different learning styles, or enabling students to express interests or feelings.
- Take a class in a visual art activity or skill, such as drawing, painting, ceramics, or photography.
- Visit a local visual art organization. Volunteer a few hours each month to gain a behind-the-scenes perspective on how artists work.
- Structure a session to explore how visual art specialists and classroom teachers can work together at your school.

Curriculum-Planning Sessions

- Include a visual art specialist teacher or a professional visual artist in your planning sessions. Together, identify places where visual art would make your curriculum stronger. Collaborate on developing a unit on a visual art theme.

Parent and Community Outreach

- Explore educational outreach opportunities offered by a local museum, art gallery, or artists' cooperative. Brainstorm how to fund this kind of activity.
- Present an exhibition of student work, to which you invite parents and members of the visual art community. Ask students to reflect on how their study of visual art has benefited their learning.

Additional Resources

Related Video Library Programs

Watch these programs for more information on ideas explored in “Teaching Visual Art”:

- Expanding the Role of the Arts Specialist
- Teaching Dance
- Teaching Music
- Teaching Theatre
- Collaborating With a Cultural Resource

Web Resources

The Arts in Every Classroom video library Web site: www.learner.org/channel/libraries/artsineveryclassroom

The Arts in Every Classroom workshop Web site: www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom

Standards for the Arts

National Standards for Arts Education: www.ed.gov/pubs/ArtsStandards.html

State Standards for the Arts: [www.ncsl.org/programs/arts/artsed/artedhom.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/arts/artsted/artedhom.htm)

Related Organizations and Resources

National Art Education Association: www.naea-reston.org

Hyde Art Museum: www.hydeartmuseum.org/index.htm

Information on Peter Paul Rubens: www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/rubens

Notes
