

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: Using Art to Promote Literacy

**Source:** Brandace Elliott, MCC AmeriCorps\*VISTA, University of Michigan 2005-2006

Issue being addressed: There is evidence that integrating arts in curriculum education has positive effects on learners.\* Studies show that learning in one context assists learning in a different context. Certain forms of art enhance and complement basic reading and writing skills. Youth learning to read and write must be able to associate letters, words, and phrases with sound sentences and meanings. Art allows individuals to use and understand symbols, images, movement, sound and artistic conventions.\* If youth are encouraged to express themselves in a form of art that inspires creative and cognitive thinking they are better equipped to relate to and interpret reading and writing literature. \*

Motivation: Take into account the diverse cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional needs of the youth.<sup>Ⓝ</sup>

- Design projects around the needs of your audiences

Approaches: Collaborations and partnerships foster healthy relationships and give youth the sense of being self-empowered—learning will occur more organically

- Create a safe place for creative and personal expression
- Engage youth in making decisions and encourage participation
- Place value on individual opinions

Strategies: Clearly defined goals and vision will set the stage for developing a comprehensive framework that will include all aspects that you wish to cover.

- Make sure that literacy is known as the number one priority
- Create a general format of the literacy project (What will you do first, second and third? How will you end the project? Who will lead the activities?)
- Allow room for input and suggestions
- Throughout the process make sure that the activities are aimed at meeting earlier defined goals
- Develop a plan for program evaluation or reflection

Materials: Use materials and conduct activities that are relevant to the youth and/or may be of interest to participants

- Make the content of each activity significant to the youth
- Incorporate skills that are applicable to different contexts
- Introduce a variety of art media and writing forms

Actions:

- Use icebreakers and warm-up activities to ease tension and create an welcoming atmosphere
- Employ art-based activities as a prompts that will lead to a writing activity. Use activities that call for personal responses, interpretation, evoke input, or ask for an opinion.
- Encourage participants to share their pieces. Afterwards, per the individual's request, provide positive feedback and/or constructive criticism.

\*Ruppert, Sandra S. Critical Evidence. National Assembly of State Art Agencies in collaboration with the Arts Education Partnership. Washington, DC: National Assembly of State Art Agencies, 2006. 17 July 2006 <<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org>>.

\*"Arts Literacy." ArtsEdge. 2004. 17 July 2006 <[http://www.artsedge.dca.wa.gov.au/7\\_2\\_literacy.asp](http://www.artsedge.dca.wa.gov.au/7_2_literacy.asp)>.

Resources:

Artslit.org

<http://knowledgeloom.org/tab/index.jsp>