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How Does the World See Me?

How Does the World See Me?

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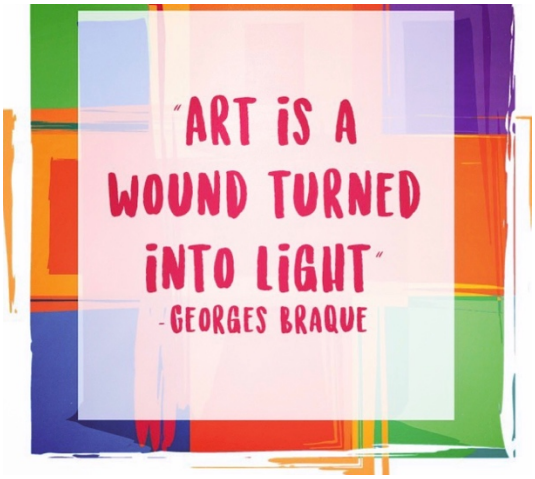
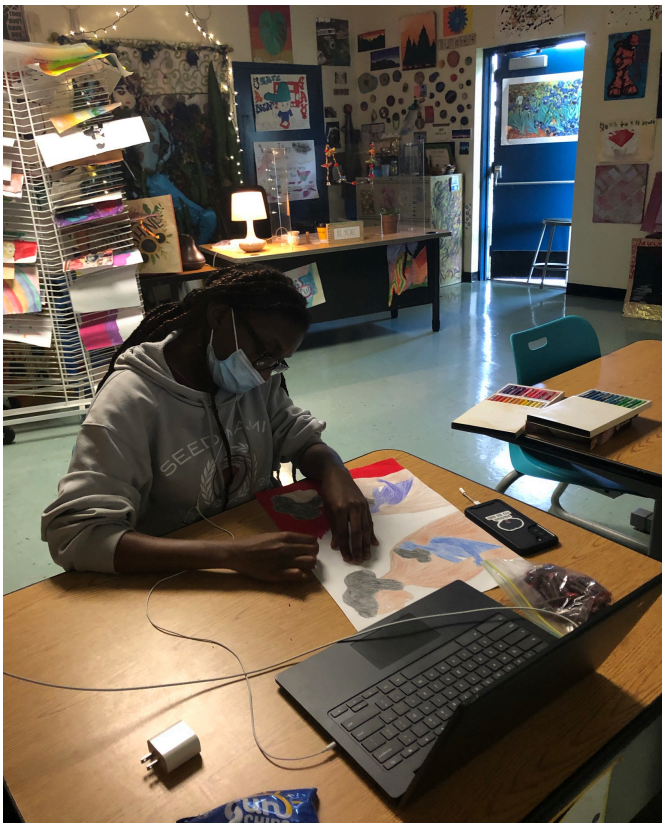


GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The varied and prolonged levels of stress that racism unjustly imparts on our youth continues to be a major and enduring issue in our society today. As we have seen, Covid-19 and the effects of the pandemic have only further highlighted and made plain the destabilizing and destructive force that racism is in our society. Student **anxiety and depression** are on the rise, and though this was certainly true before, the experiences of our very recent months have made it that much more so. We must strive more than ever to create genuine and just community in our society, and we as educators are charged to do so in our **classroom communities** under much more demanding circumstances in these times. The students touched most under these conditions are the students that I serve, and I take seriously the responsibility that these are the communities we must stand and represent for and with—especially if we continue to prioritize and fight for the importance of "of the people, by the people, and for the people." This project fills the need of giving students access, options, and a safe space (whether physical, online, or blended) in which to engage in the sometimes difficult and **uncomfortable discussions** around racism, antiracism, art, history, and culture. We will seek the maximum amount of listener/viewer engagement and impact through open hearts and creative mindsets and opportunity to put our creations out into the world (whether through physical events or online webinars). If we look upon our academic situation with a growth mindset, we as educators will see that we have an opportunity to help facilitate and create a **paradigm shift**, and potentially one in which we will see the emergence of a more **empathetic, just, and antiracist present and future**. Our children are amazing people, and they are up for the challenge, if only we will show them that we care enough to be up for it, too.



FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

VISUAL ARTS

VA.912.H.1: Through study in the arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live(d).

VA.912.H.1.1: Analyze the impact of social, economic, religious, and/or political issues on the function or meaning of the artwork.

VA.912.H.3: Connections among the arts and other disciplines strengthen learning and the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to and from other fields.

VA.912.H.3.2: Apply the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills used in art to develop creative solutions for real-life issues.

SOCIAL STUDIES

SS.912.C.1: Demonstrate an understanding of the origins and purposes of government, law, and the American political system.

SS.912.C.2: Evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens and determine methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system.

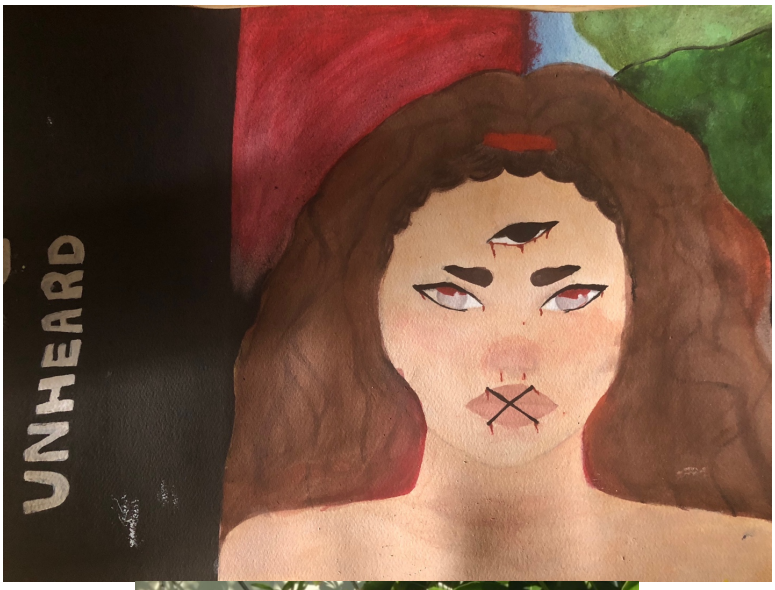
SS.912.C.3: Demonstrate an understanding of the principles, functions, and organization of government.

LANGUAGE ARTS

LAFS.8.W.1.3.d: Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

LAFS.8.L.3.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

LAFS.8.W.1.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.



COURSE OUTLINE/OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

Inspired by twenty years of teaching and learning with students from Kindergarten through high school in Harlem (NYC), New Orleans, and Miami, **How Does the World See Me?** puts visual arts, interdisciplinary studies, culturally relevant pedagogy, and social/emotional learning in a context that has mattered for my students and that continues to make their learning and sense of self come alive. Through various genres and modes of creative expression, students have found a

safe space for risk-taking and exploration of challenging topics of equity and justice in our culture and beyond. As such, this presentation will give an overview of some of the work that we have created: it offers possibilities to be adapted by those who work with youth in various capacities.

This project will give students an opportunity to both intensely explore personal agency and self-identity, as well as to extend this personal reflection (SEL) with aspects of history (past and present) and culture viewed as non-fiction "texts." At its heart, this project supports and re-echoes the great James Baldwin's wise reminder that: "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." The core of empathy is the ability to listen, and so in genuinely listening to and learning from our students and their experiences and perceptions of the injustices of racism in our society, we as their teachers will learn much. As we explicitly explore, discuss, and create work through the varied activities that this project presents, another important goal is that this engagement will propel students further on a lifelong path of seeking equity for all. Such work allows students to challenge biased and racist assumptions about who they are as individuals, and to feel a deeper sense of personal agency and empowerment through their authentic creative expression.

PURPOSE

Select high school Visual Arts classes will be immersed in a series of projects (as detailed below) that will provide the opportunity to unearth a continuing dialogue and opportunity for research and creative expression around the issues of racism and antiracism in American life and history. This project will be centered around a variety of touchstone texts/imagery in the academic areas of history, civics, current events, art history, and hands-on artmaking/creative expression. This project will allow me to build upon our school's dedicated focus to an academically rich, interdisciplinary curriculum, as well as to go deeper in practical, intensive work in

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). The proposed project achieves this goal through meaningful explorations that center around the **Essential Question (EQ**) of: **"How Does the World See Me?"**: this question is one that invites students to be open and honest in their feelings and lived experience about how they believe American society sees them.

Through engaging in the series of activities described below, students will have an opportunity to engage with a wide variety of authors, artists, and influencers, particularly in the realm of antiracism. Through a blended learning approach, students will have the opportunity to both have prolonged and meaningful group discussions, create original works of writing and art, and be given the opportunity to engage in personal and peer critiques of their creations. All of these activities have the possibility to be experienced whether in person at the physical school building, or online in a distance learning model. As such, this project also seeks ways to successfully balance the amount of student screen time with hands-on, movement time and opportunities for engagement in various creative modalities, in any given class session.

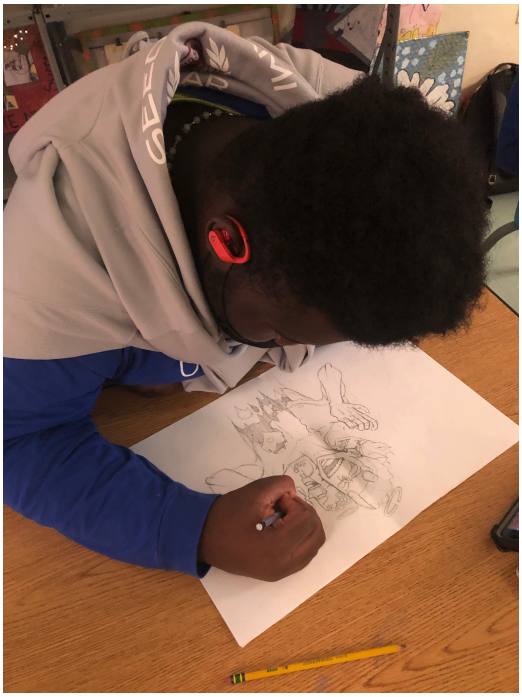
Each student will build a portfolio of work (most likely in a mix of physical and digital media) in a variety of personally selected creative genres. The project will culminate in a school gallery presentation, and potentially an exhibition in a public community venue. If this is not possible due to continued Covid-19 restrictions, we will strive to create an online gallery and live presentation space for students, creating a virtual event and/or online forum to share with our greater community.

RATIONALE

As those entrusted with the sacred responsibility of educating our youth, we must be conscious in the realization that providing **access** and **choice** are essential for students to have myriad possibilities through wish to express themselves. When we take the time to build authentic relationships with the students whom we serve, we provide the space(s) for them to **explore**, **excavate**, and **extend** their

emerging sense of self-identity and self-esteem. When we teach and model free expression of the self while still maintaining respectful boundaries of others, we create the possibility for student artists/writers to show vulnerability in their work through facing those personal insights and experiences that are uniquely theirs. When we as educators truly **listen** to our students, when we help to facilitate a classroom or seminar model where they are co-creators of knowledge (indeed where they even co-teach at times!), we help to **Intentionally** build those skills wherein the arts have become a crucial modality for self-expression and release. By extension, through using some aspects of this project as a vehicle to discuss relevant local and world-wide current events, students have an opportunity to become more aware and concerned citizens, and ultimately more critically thinking and informed to potentially become the active change-makers of the next generation.

I have spearheaded this project with an average of 15-20 students per class, grades 9-12, with a total of 5 groups (approx. 100 students overall). These groups have been the "pilot program" so to speak of how to effectively conduct such a class in a mainly hybrid setting (Spring Semester 2021). Students in the 9th grade groups meet 2-3x weekly (depending on the rotation schedule), and the 10th-12th grade group meets 5x weekly. The project could definitely be adapted to other age groups (both much younger and much older): it could also work with larger or smaller groups. The projects I have designed, and the readings and response activities structured, can work well with a wide range of class situations, which makes "How Does the World See Me?" a perfect selection as Disseminator material.



LESSON PLANS

Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix of the National Book Award-winning Stamped from the Beginning – written by Jason Reynold and adapted from Stamped from the Beginning by Ibram H. Kendi. (our touchstone text!)
Author Jason Reynolds believes that in order to truly enjoy and learn from history in an authentic way, that you must be a part of the conversation of history, to be engaged and engulfed in it. Too many times we either water down, omit, or perpetuate racist narratives and untruths in our teaching of history in formalized education. **Stamped** asks us to engage in taking a different approach through the content of its chapters, exploring and engaging with the difficult truths of American history. In this accessible and attention-grabbing "remix" of Ibram X. Kendi's book for adults, Reynolds seeks to also shift the way that we talk about race in this country, and to ensure that conversations around anti-racism are permeating all of

our educational practices. Though it explores the colonized history of America from beginning to present, the text asks students to move out of theory and into what they can engage with and influence in the world around them. Reynolds calls to light the contradictions that we all contain when it comes to race, highlighting myriad examples of this in historical figures. This text will be our touchstone text that we begin with and return to throughout the course of this project. We will use its example to shift culture through having informed conversations about American history and our role in it today.

Students will begin to formally consider our Essential Question of: "How does the world see me?". They will return to this question throughout the group reading and dialogue around this book, which can easily take place whether in person or online for class. Reading excerpts from the book and/or listening to Reynolds' narration of the text on audiobook will provide a rich experience to both read and listen to the author's words through his own voice. These connections to the text will lead to free writes, poetic inspiration, image inspiration, Think-Pair-Shares, interview with community members, etc. as ways to make history come alive and stay relevant in the present. See www.nea.org for publisher Reader's Guides which break down the book chapter by chapter).

"I Look at the World"

Students will engage in a critical analysis/class dialogue around Langston Hughes' antiracist poem of the early 1930s. Hughes writes of : "This fenced-off narrow space/Assigned to me," and tells the reader that "all these walls oppression builds/Will have to go!" Langston speaks of possibility, of creating this new world that exists inside his mind. Students will create creative "Antiracist Brain Scan MRI" artwork (2D, 3D, physical or digital) that visually show the viewer what ideas exist in the artist's mind to combat racism. Students will also have an opportunity to write a poem inspired by the work of Hughes that also connects to this artistic "vision scan."

"Take a Breath For…"

"Race and racism is a reality that so many of us grow up learning to just deal with. But if we ever hope to move past it, it can't just be on people of color to deal with it. It's up to all of us—Black, White, everyone—no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out."

-First Lady Michelle Obama

"When he can't breathe, none of us can breathe."

-Attorney Benjamin Crump, 6/3/2020, at the site of George Floyd's murder

Students will explore the power of the words "I Can't Breathe," uttered in their final moments by George Floyd, Eric Garner, and others who have needlessly lost their lives due to racist policy and action taken by police across the country. This activity asks students to reframe this pain into an action step that: "I will use my breath to speak for those who can't breathe." Students will consider the question: "Who or what will I take a breath for?". They will challenge themselves to think empathetically both in loving themselves and others, creating a work of art that explores this theme of the symbolization of breath. Students even may wish to design a new mask for Covid-19 protection that represents this theme through imagery, color, and/or text.

"Representation and Antiracism Through the Tradition of Quilting: Exploring the Work of Gee's Bend, Bisa Butler, and Faith Ringgold"

Quilts often symbolize resourcefulness, as quilters use the (fabric) resources that are on hand to create them. Quilts can also symbolize heritage, as they can be created using fabrics that represent a moment in time, or the continued legacy of family ancestry. Quilts are often passed down through generations and become treasured heirlooms of family lineage. Quilts can also serve to represent or to question moments in history, and ask us to look at narratives of

racism and antiracism in the symbolic imagery stitched into each work of art. The work of the **Gee's Bend** quilt circle, **Bisa Butler's** portrait quilts (that look amazingly like painted works), and **Faith Ringgold's** famous story quilts (also often featured in her children's literature) give three different historical vantage points and styles of quilting. All of these quilters lead back to issues of representation and storytelling, where the lineage of an individual or community is told through the imagery of the quilter's work. Students will explore the history of each of these artisans and consider how they would like to be represented in a quilt design. Students will engage in creating a unique quilt square (utilizing physical or digital art, depending on our learning situation)that they feel represents a snapshot of how they would like the world to see them. This may be achieved in either an abstract or realistic image of themselves, or perhaps capture a significant moment from their family lineage, utilizing whatever mixed media that they choose. The instructor will assemble all of these squares to make a collective community quilt. As a culmination piece, we will physically or digitally create a collective group mixed-media quilt, and everyone can share their Artist Statement online detailing how they think the world sees them, and how this quilt square is a response in creating a symbolic image of how they would like the world to perceive them. Question and Answer period to follow, and it would also be great to involve school staff members to create a quilt square as well.

"A Baroque-n System: How Do We Fix It?"

Students will explore an overview of the **Baroque era** in Visual Arts and culture and recognize the lack of representation of People of Color in the portraits of that era. Students will use the Baroque-era aesthetic to inform their creation of a mixed-media personal self-portrait: the artwork will use a headshot-style photo of themselves connected to a drawn or painted body with clothing representative of this era. Vocabulary to be discussed in group discussions; appropriation, re-appropriation.

Question for students to consider:
-How would the world have seen me during this time?
-What were the forces in play that led to omission of most People of Color in these portraits? Who decides who is represented, and who is not in society?
- What does this say about the society of that time?
- How does my artwork represent an alternate view of history, and one that is potentially more inclusive?

"Re-Imagining Our Monuments and Public Art"

"The statues were symbols. Symbols matter. We use them in telling the stories of our past and who we are, and we chose them carefully. Once I learned the real history of these statues, I knew there was only path forward, and that meant making straight what was crooked, making right what was wrong. It starts with telling the truth about the past."
— Mitch Landrieu, **In the Shadow of Statues: A White Southerner Confronts History**

As we watch protests happen throughout the world, we seen numerous images and live footage of vestiges of racist legacy be toppled over, making space for antiracist symbolism to potentially take its place in image and in action. Former mayor of New Orleans Mitch Landrieu's words will be used as a hook for students to discuss and begin brainstorming individually or in small groups to choose one or more of the ideas below. Student Artist Statements will reflect their rationale for all of the choices that they made in designing this re-imagined monument or piece of public art.
Design a new:
-flag for a state or identity that is racist (Mississippi state flag, Confederate flag, etc.)
-sports uniform for a team whose current name and imagery is racist (i.e. the Redskins, etc.)
-monument to replace one that has been taken down that commemorated those who were slave traders, responsible for genocides, such as in Native American history, etc.

-mural idea, such as the creative interpretations of "Black Lives Matter" that we have seen across the country
-mural idea, like those recently created for George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, to honor and remember an individual whose life was ended due to violent, racist action taken against them unjustly.

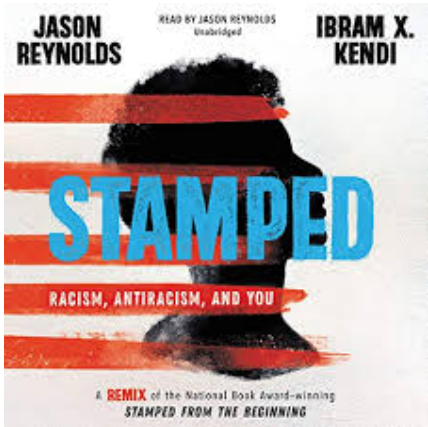
ASSESSMENT:

The 4Cs of Visual Arts assessment—**CRAFTSMANSHIP, COMPOSITION, COMMUNICATION, CREATIVITY**—explained below and indicated on grading rubric provide the key touchstones that students use throughout the year as a consistent grading model. These 4Cs help guide students to create assigned projects that are well-thought out and executed with care for detail. Additionally, **Artist Statements** are required for this project, wherein students have an opportunity to explain their project in a written format complementing the visual image. Please see Rubric options at the end of this document, which can be used for Self, Peer and Teacher Critiques, all of which are experientially important for our students.

THE 4Cs OF VISUAL ARTS ASSESSMENT

- **CRAFTSMANSHIP-** Did I develop my artistic skill with the art tools and materials provided?
- **COMPOSITION**- Did I intentionally organize Art Elements to create a unified design?
- **COMMUNICATION**- Did I apply art knowledge and skill to express, identify, and evaluate my ideas in visual, written, and oral presentation formats?
- **CREATIVITY**- Did I face challenges and express my ideas in unique and personal ways?

RESOURCE LIST



CLASSROOM MATERIALS & SETUP

Though the focus of these activities primarily resides in the hands-on "maker space" realm, it is of great help to have at least one computer, Internet access, and some type of projector or interactive

board for the most effective presentation of these ideas. All of the materials listed below can be adapted/modified to meet budgetary, time, and/or other concerns. Let creativity and resourcefulness be your guide as you determine which ideas can work for you as presented, and which can be better adapted to fit your own needs.

- Copies of **Stamped** by Jason Reynolds
  Consider also inspirational texts, including creative writing such as poetry and other varied genres of your choice to be used as additional mentor texts, for shared Read Alouds and templates for writing prompts/creative project ideas
- Instant camera(s) and film—for the purposes of this project we used a Polaroid One Step+ and a Fuji Instax Mini camera. If budget does not allow, you can adapt to use Smartphones and print student photos at lower cost.
- Assorted art supplies, such as: various paints/brushes, background papers, textural, et a; embellishments, dry sketching, and coloring materials of choice (www.blick.com is a great option for ordering supplies and offers frequent discounts and sales)

RESOURCES

Students can continue their study of artists and cultural references covered in class by further research, and educators may also enhance students' research by inviting local artists and community members as guest speakers to inspire students' imaginative potential. Students can further be engaged by participation in field trips to some of the city's great cultural resources: museums such as PAMM/The Perez Art Museum of Miami (pamm.org), as well as spaces such as The Marguiles Collection at the Warehouse (www.marguileswarehouse.com) offer student-centered docent-led tours and gallery walks that offer a comprehensive, immersive experience. Walking tours of areas such as Wynwood bring creative ideas to life for students in a different way than the classroom alone.

ADAPTABILITY & GROUPING

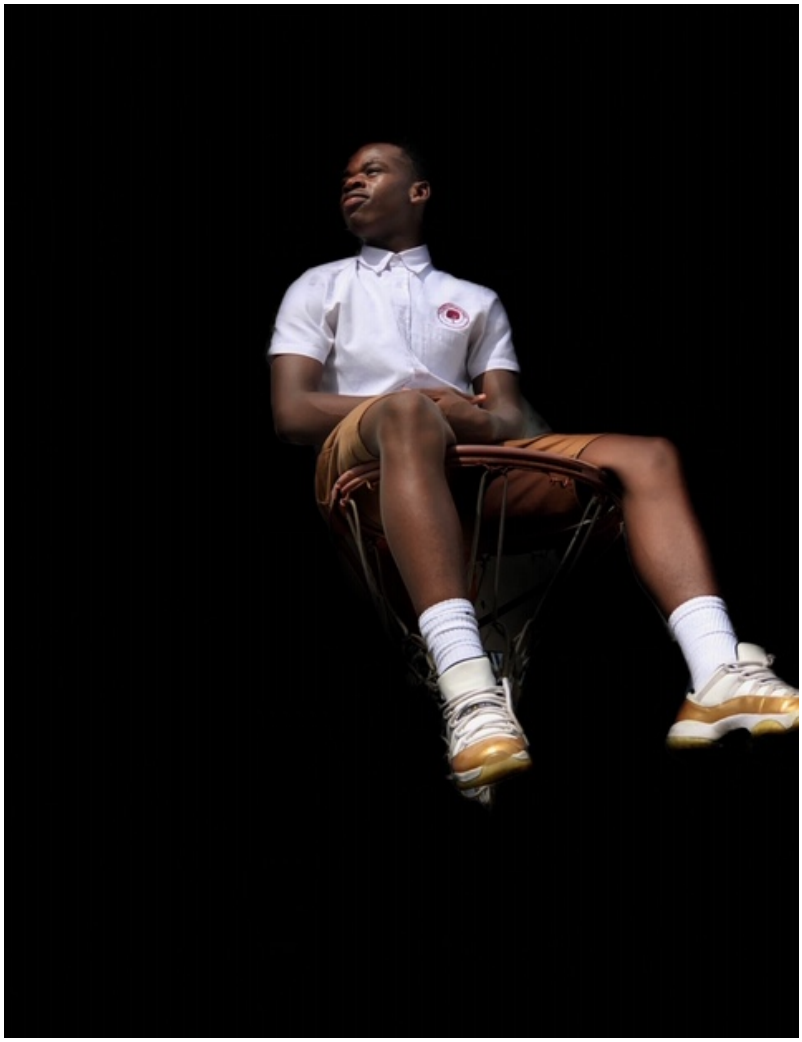
This project can be easily **adapted** not only by educators in middle and high school arts classes, but also by elementary teachers, English Language Arts teachers, and Social Studies/World History teachers due to the interdisciplinary nature of the activities. Additionally, this project is adaptable for mental health counselors and social workers, as the highlighted focus of the activities could primarily rest on the social-emotional learning and connectedness aspects. Grouping size is also easily adaptable as the activities presented can work well whether one-on-one, small group, or full classroom number of students. By extension, these activities can be adapted for those presenting for PD at their respective schools, modeling for adults the importance of social/emotional connection to our students and to each other.

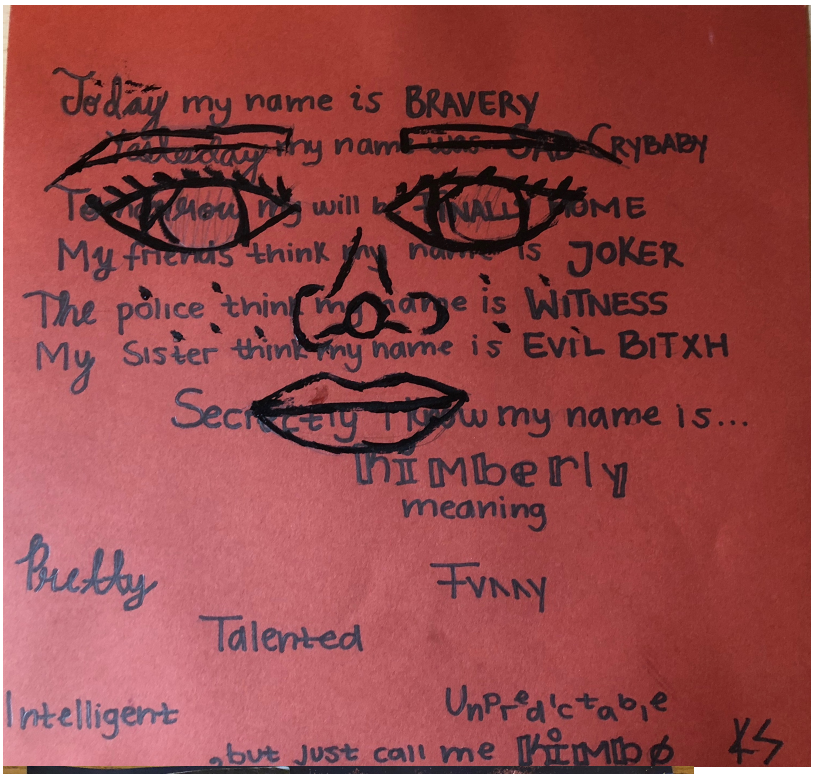
OVERALL VALUE

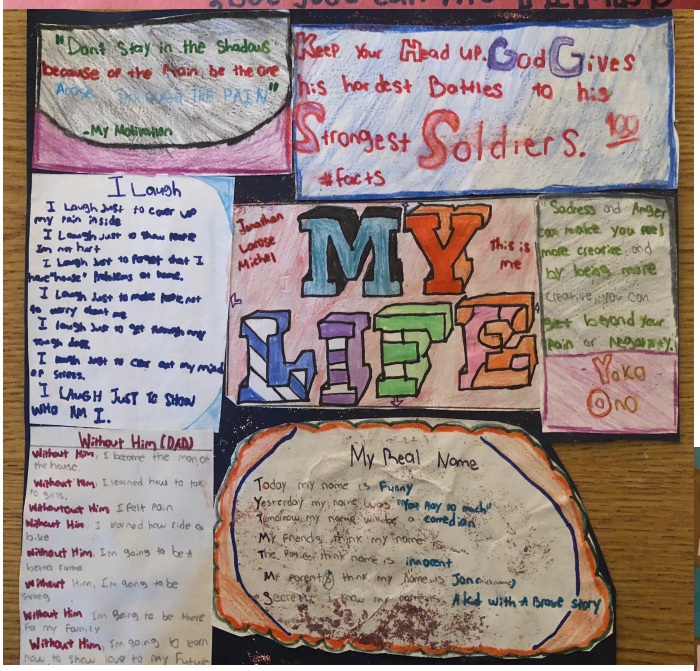
Any classroom space--particularly Visual Arts, English Language Arts, or History--can successfully implement this project. Additionally, the ideas within this project lend themselves well to interdisciplinary learning, wherein educators teaching in different subject areas work together to bring students' learning more alive through connectedness and shared relevancy in thoughtfully engineered curriculum planning.

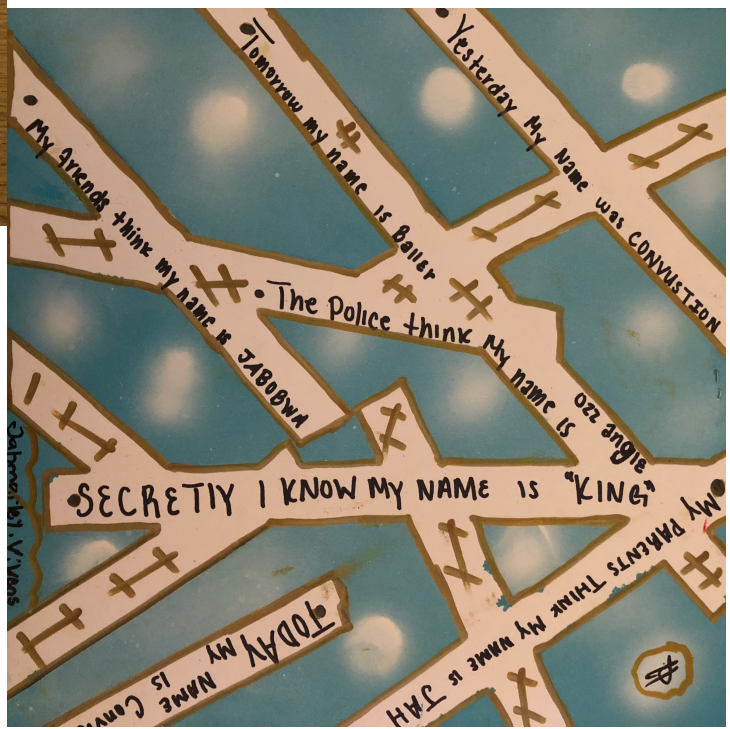
It is startlingly clear in these times that our youth suffer from more anxiety, depression, and suicidal tendencies in ever-growing numbers. To ignore these statistics is to ignore the living, breathing students coming into our classroom spaces and influences each week at our respective places of learning. It is up to us to not only challenge ourselves in building academic knowledge and success, but to help mentor and facilitate the social and emotional growth and health of our children. The arts (and the adaptation of the arts in creative and personal ways) is one way we can help to provide safe and open spaces in which our youth may honestly express

themselves. In such designed spaces, students authentically feel that **their voices matter,** and that **their lives matter.** In giving students opportunities for ACCESS and CHOICE, both in the differentiating of our teaching and projects, but also in the time we spend conferencing with them and guiding them through their idea process, we show that we trust their intellectual capacity, and they are not invisible. One of the most important 21st century skills globally will prove more and more to be **empathy**: **what will be the legacy we as educators leave for modeling and facilitating our youth what it means to truly respect and care for our fellow Beings?**









How Does the World See Me?

Visual Arts Project Rubric

Rubric Components	Point Scale				Commentary
	4	3	2	1	Peer/Self-Critique
CRAFTSMANSHIP Did I develop my artistic skill with the art tools and materials provided?					
COMPOSITION Did I intentionally organize Visual Art Elements to create a unified design?					
COMMUNICATION Did I apply art knowledge and skill to express my ideas in visual, written, and oral presentation formats? Was I a leader?					
CREATIVITY Did I face challenges and express my ideas in unique and personal ways?					
ADDITIONAL NOTES					

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Studio Habits of Mind Student Self-Reflection Rubric

Studio Habit	4	3	2	1
Develop Craft	The materials and tools I used were chosen intentionally and applied with care. I skillfully incorporated new techniques as well as made connections to my previously made artwork/experiences.	The materials and tools I used were chosen carefully. I applied new techniques as well made connections to other artwork/experiences.	I put some thought (with teacher help) into the choosing of the materials/tools. I attempted new techniques and tried to make connections to other artwork/experiences.	I put little to no thought (even with teacher help) into the choosing of the materials/tools. I did not try new techniques and there are no connections to other artwork/experiences.
Engage & Persist	I challenged myself to embrace my art making problems and developed a distinct focus within my work.	I challenged myself to not let my art making problems hinder my work too much; I developed a focus within my work.	I let my art making problems influence my work and my focus lost clarity because of it.	I let my art making problems take over my artwork and my artwork lost focus as a result.
Envision	I imagined and practiced many ideas/processes before and during my art making.	I considered and tried out a few ideas before and during my art making.	I started and continued my artwork with little envisioning or practice.	I started and continued my work with no consideration of how it might turn out.
Express	My work clearly conveys an idea, mood, or place that expresses some part of me. My work shows an awareness of other viewers.	My work communicates an idea, mood or place. My work somewhat shows an awareness of other viewers.	My work somewhat communicates an idea. There is little awareness of other viewers.	It is not clear what my work is communicating or how it reflects me. There is no awareness of other viewers.
Observe	I spent an extensive amount of time observing my subject matter, art making processes and /or the environment around me that I may have otherwise missed.	I spent time observing my subject matter, art making processes and/or the environment around me that I may have otherwise missed.	I spent limited time observing my subject matter, art making processes and/or the environment around me.	I spent no time observing my subject matter, art making processes and/or the environment around me.
Stretch & Explore	I took risks in my art making and learned from my mistakes. I taught my peers with new ways of art making.	I challenged myself to explore a new idea or try out a new media but I still "played it safe".	I experimented with a new idea or media but my finished work reflects what I always do.	I stayed with what I am familiar with and/or reproduced someone else's work or ideas.
Understand the Art World	I spent time discovering aspects of artwork from other artists that I may have missed before.	I spent some time discovering aspects of artwork from other artists.	I spent just a small amount of time examining others' artwork.	I ignored any and all others' artwork.
Reflect	I am very conscious of my art making process and my honest self-evaluations reflect that.	I am aware of my art making processes and my self-evaluations reflect that.	I am becoming more aware of my art making processes and my self-evaluations are starting to reflect that.	I am unaware of my art making process and/or I have no self-evaluations of my work.

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Leadership Skills

FOSTERED THROUGH ART

Collaboration

Communication

Creativity

Problem-Solving

Commitment/Perseverance

Responsiblity

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