

Promoting *Social and Emotional Learning* through Service-Learning Art Projects

BY ROBERT L. RUSSELL AND KAREN HUTZEL

Imagine students learning to make art while simultaneously learning to behave in class.



A team of youth artists in a service-learning program work together to finalize a mural in their neighborhood.

Effective teaching requires positive conduct among learners, but what if in teaching youths the skills to make art we could also be teaching them the skills to make wise behavioral decisions?

Research in classroom management is clear that student conduct is positively affected by sound instruction, which includes meeting students' basic needs for stimulating and successful learning in an emotionally secure setting (Jones & Jones, 2004, pp. 282-283). Good art teaching, then, includes creating conditions for effective learner behavior. There is, however, another approach that understands student discipline as a subject matter for instruction, in contrast to a matter of meeting-basic-needs (Charney, 2002; Gartrell, 1995; Jones & Jones, 2004). In other words, responsible pupil behavior should be specifically and directly taught to students, like any other subject in the curriculum, not just conditionally managed. Although these two approaches are different, they are not mutually exclusive, and in the writers' view should be employed together.

The general lines of reason for this subject-to-be-taught strategy seem to be two. One is that a positive shift in the teacher's attitude toward students and their behavior will occur if disruptive actions are perceived as an "academic" problem (Jones & Jones, 2004, p. 303). Stated differently, if the misdeed is understood as the result of a deficit in skill, not simply a fault in conduct, it will more likely be thought of positively as a "mistake," in need of more practice, than thought of negatively as a "misbehavior," in need of more regulation (Gartrell, 1995, pp. 27-34). Additionally, in the subject-to-be-taught view, the teacher is more likely to see the disruptive child or adolescent as a "learner" in need of individualized tutoring, rather than an uncooperative kid in need of character adjustment. A teacher's positive disposition toward student discipline typically will have positive results in the general classroom, including improved academic success.

The other argument for treating student discipline as a topic-to-teach is that the different ways we go about meeting our basic needs and gratifying our desires are, in fact, learned. What is learned can be taught, whether or not the "instructor" is aware of it and whether or not what is taught or learned is right or best. The goal, then, is to teach explicitly those understandings, skills, and dispositions that positively affect student discipline as a regular part of the curriculum.

Now, as it turns out, for over a decade a growing body of research and related school practice has been demonstrating the importance of “social and emotional learning” (SEL) in preparing our children both for academic success and, more broadly, life effectiveness (CASEL, 2003; Elias et al., 1997; Weissberg, 2000; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). SEL can be defined as “... the process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence” (Elias et al., 1997, p. 2). This competence, considered later in the article, increases optimally when integrated throughout the curriculum (Zins et al., 2004). Figure 1 presents the core SEL competencies verbatim from the Collaborative for Academic and Social Learning (CASEL, 2004; Zins et al., 2004, p. 7).

Despite the substantial work on SEL, our search of art education literature failed to find investigations based on SEL research and practice or specific mention of SEL. This article intends to take an initial step in exploring how SEL can advance art education and art education can advance SEL.

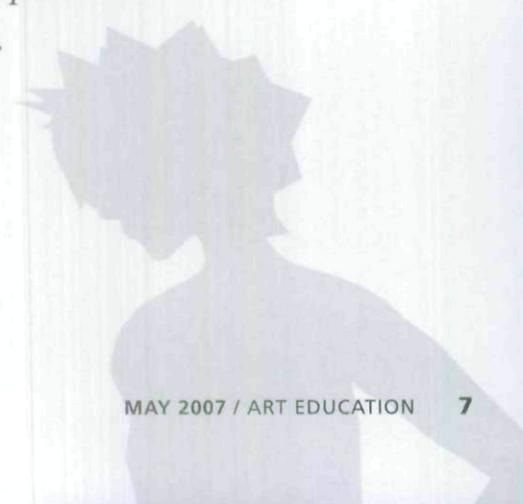
In the application of SEL to art education, are we asking art educators to teach yet another subject? One response to this question is that art educators already teach social-emotional skills. After all, we know that much of art throughout history engaged social issues in one way or another. Moreover, the creation of and response to art involves emotional dimensions in some respect. Nevertheless, in the authors’ experience, SEL objectives are generally addressed indirectly or implicitly in art education practice, not directly or explicitly, as recommended by SEL research and literature (Zins et al., 2004, pp. 8-12).

Another response to the question of an extra subject is that we are asking art educators to teach new content, but in ways integral to the means and ends of students’ art learning, not parallel or supplemental to it. In general, this can be accomplished for SEL by raising and reflecting on social-emotional issues within the artistic process itself. The methodology presented here is but one example of this general strategy applied to service-learning, the procedures of which are described next.

Self-Awareness
<i>Identifying emotions:</i> Identifying and labeling one’s feelings
<i>Recognizing strengths:</i> Identifying and cultivating one’s strengths and positive qualities
Social-Awareness
<i>Perspective-taking:</i> Identifying and understanding the thoughts and feelings of others
<i>Appreciating diversity:</i> Understanding that individual and group differences complement each other and make the world more interesting
Self-Management
<i>Managing emotions:</i> Monitoring and regulating feelings so they aid rather than impede the handling of situations
<i>Goal setting:</i> Establishing and working toward the achievement of short- and long-term pro-social goals
Responsible Decision Making
<i>Analyzing situations:</i> Accurately perceiving situations in which a decision is to be made and assessing factors that might influence one’s response
<i>Assuming personal responsibility:</i> Recognizing and understanding one’s obligation to engage in ethical, safe, and legal behaviors
<i>Respecting others:</i> Believing that others deserve to be treated with kindness and compassion and feeling motivated to contribute to the common good
<i>Problem solving:</i> Generating, implementing, and evaluating positive and informed solutions to problems
Relationship Skills
<i>Communication:</i> Using verbal and nonverbal skills to express oneself and promote positive and effective exchanges with others
<i>Building relationships:</i> Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding connections with individuals and groups
<i>Negotiation:</i> Achieving mutually satisfactory resolutions to conflict by addressing the needs of all concerned
<i>Refusal:</i> Effectively conveying and following through with one’s decision not to engage in unwanted, unsafe, unethical, or unlawful conduct

Figure 1. SEL Core Competencies as stated by CASEL (2004).

The goal, then, is to teach explicitly those understandings, skills, and dispositions that positively affect student discipline as a regular part of the curriculum.



Service-Learning

Service-learning is no longer new to school programs, elementary through higher education (Roberts, 2002). Following Bringle's and Hatcher's (1996) conception of "service-learning" in higher education, three characteristics are central to service-learning as presented here: (1) being part of the regular curriculum, (2) involving reciprocal expertise among partners, and (3) extending students' learning to include the experiences of others in the community. Discussion of each characteristic follows.

Taylor ... proposed utilizing service-learning in art education to create a reciprocal learning experience and to recognize the postmodern use of art for social change and political awareness. Thus, the utilization of service-learning in art education highlights socially relevant purposes of postmodern art while expanding the classroom beyond the borders and walls of the school.

A part of the art curriculum. Service-learning is a planned unit within the school's art curriculum. As such, it is evaluated and graded as any other school learning. The unit, in other words, is not just an "add-on" or an "on-your-own" requirement to pass the art class. Moreover, in this application the art teacher presents content that is interdisciplinary, coordinating concepts and skills from art-design and community-planning. The teacher also supports and participates in the planning and implementation of the students' service activity, unlike basic volunteering activities. This is critical, not only for student safety but to insure the educational integrity, which includes a joint effort with community members.

A circle of "experts." The unit is, of course, designed to help students learn to serve others. But this service is not one way. An explorative process is involved that is collaborative and reciprocal. Thus the community is not used for the artist's (students') ends, but neither is the artist expected to simply do the community's bidding. A reciprocity or partnership is set up, with mutual benefits and responsibilities. Each partner is understood to have his or her own set of competencies not exactly replicated in the other partner. For example, where the student or student-team has art knowledge and skills, community members have unique knowledge and wherewithal from having lived in a set of circumstances for an extended period of time.

Learning includes the experience of others. Because of this different know-how, the community members and the students are each "serving" and "being served" by the other and each is benefiting and learning from the other. The interdisciplinary study, noted above, prepares the students to help their community cohorts express their own reality-vision. The goal is to extend beyond the expression of one's own experience to that of others and to grow from it. Ideally, the experience for all collaborators is transformative.

Service-learning in art education. Within the field of art education, service-learning is framed as a community art practice to create social reconstruction and learn from community practices (Hutzel, 2005a). Taylor (2002) proposed a postmodern service-learning pedagogy "as a transformative and socially reconstructive practice" within art education (p. 124). Taylor (2004) also proposed utilizing service-learning in art education to create a

reciprocal learning experience and to recognize the postmodern use of art for social change and political awareness. Thus, the utilization of service-learning in art education highlights socially relevant purposes of postmodern art while expanding the classroom beyond the borders and walls of the school.

Because of the social character of service-learning and the emotional challenges inevitably faced by its participants, service-learning is a natural means to nurture SEL. To the extent that SEL improves during the service-learning experience, so too will that experience and its outcomes likely improve. To help realize this combined potential, a particular approach to service-learning was selected, comprised of a collaborate-and-create method employing an asset-based strategy. The collaborate-and-create method will be described first.

Collaborate-and-Crete Method

I feel like I played a big role in facilitating [the art] process, but not to the degree where it was just solely my work. I think that's the most essential part when you're working with a community is to allow room for other ideas. (Arynn McCandless, Cincinnati teaching artist, from interview with author, summer 2004)

Hutzel (2005b) described service-learning in art education as a method to make use of an individual's gifts, skills, and capacities in contributing toward participatory artmaking. This method includes teaching students the materials and techniques of the art form selected for the project and helping them to deal with related practical issues, such as time and budget constraints. However, more than practical skills are required in teaching a characteristic approach to art. Russell (2004) proposed different "orientations" to public art that students learn about (see Figure 2), one of which, collaborate-and-create, is most clearly in accord with the nature of service-learning as proposed in this article.

The primary purpose of the collaborate-and-create method is to serve the particular needs and interests of the public or audience, rather than to simply express the unique vision of the artist. Of course, the work serves the artist's interest too, as the artist chooses aesthetic or personal expression through collaboration. Nevertheless, the approach seeks change in society beyond aesthetic response to the artwork itself (contrast

Hero on a Horse pre-modernist	Form and Freedom modernist	Collaborate and Create postmodernist
Focuses on or favors works that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the individual conceptions of the artists • emphasize heroic themes and idealized visions for social or political purposes • expressed in realistic or naturalistic styles 	Focuses on or favors works that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the individual conceptions of the artists • emphasize formal qualities over or to the exclusion of “extraneous” concerns such as social or political issues • expressed in abstract or non-objective styles 	Focuses on or favors works that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least some collaborative conceptualizing between the artist and the public • for the explicit purpose of addressing political or social issues • expressed in any one or a combination of styles (unlike either modernist or pre-modernist)

Figure 2. Orientations to Public Art proposed by Russell (2004).

modernist form-and-freedom). It is true that the pre-modern hero-on-a-horse orientation can and has sought to influence social and political reality. (See Figure 2.) Typically the aim is conservative, rather than the transformative hope of the collaborate-and-create orientation. Though postmodern works sometimes include heroic themes, their heroism is often found among marginalized folks marshalling available resources to meet current needs while working toward a new day—not an idealized past.

A final note before proceeding: Although the above orientations are discussed by Russell (2004) in relation to *public art*—typically large in scale, outdoors, and for whole communities—we believe the orientations can pertain to art production in general. More particularly in the case of the collaborate-and-create method, small indoor artworks created in partnership with as few as one community member (e.g., a quilt or book-artwork) can be service-learning art activities.

Asset-Based Strategy

The primary problem is lack of self-respect. No one is worthless—everybody has some talent—everything we need is right there in the gutter.

(Flora Williams, Cincinnati intercity resident, from interview with author, spring 2000)

To help facilitate the transformative purpose of the collaborate-and-create method, an asset-based strategy was selected to guide the art projects. The term *asset-based* comes from the discipline of community planning, specifi-

cally planning for the revitalization of impoverished neighborhoods (Russell & Arefi, 2003). In community planning, a distinction is made between “need-based” and “asset-based” approaches. The need-based approach identifies the particular requirements of a community followed by efforts to meet those requirements. By way of contrast, the asset-based approach identifies the resources of a community followed by efforts to build upon those resources (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

One technique of the asset-based strategy, applicable here, is an inventory of a community’s resources, sometimes called “asset-mapping” (Russell & Arefi, 2003, p. 63). Asset-mapping gained some popularity as a grassroots response to neighborhood blight, especially among local youth. For example, in Crenshaw, California, a group of young people ranging from 16 to 23 years old set about finding “what’s right” rather than “what’s wrong” with their neighborhood. They catalogued the products, services, and skills offered by local businesses; explored residents’ shopping habits; and surveyed what else the locals would like to see in the community. The youth then put this information on a website for residents’ access (Liu, 1999).

An example of asset-mapping employed by teenagers for creating public art in Cincinnati, Ohio is the community-based art program “Art in the Market” (Russell & Russell, 2001; Bastos & Hutzler, 2004). Serving a partnership between the University of Cincinnati Art Education Program and the community organization Impact Over-the-Rhine, Art in the Market employs adolescents to create art based



Participants in the Art in the Market program collaborate on the placement of a community sculpture.

on the assets of their impoverished urban neighborhood Over-the-Rhine. Together with university art and art education students, the youths highlight positive components of the neighborhood from which to draw inspiration for artmaking. The partnership often results in college students realizing the abilities of the teenagers as well as neighborhood residents. Simultaneously, the adolescents begin to appreciate their own aptitudes and the role art can play in contributing to their neighborhood while learning social-emotional lessons to contribute to their positive behavior. Art in the Market demonstrates that the asset-based strategy is as applicable to improving the individual as it is to improving the neighborhood. Indeed, in community-based programs, development of the individual and the community go hand-in-hand.

Integrating Approaches to Promote SEL

Integrating the asset-based and collaborate-and-create approaches within service-learning to promote SEL is envisioned to have the following general characteristics: Individual students or student-teams create artworks not only for others, but in some way or degree with others. These co-contributors have one or more needs (social, emotional, physical) different from or greater than the students, as, for example, patients in a children’s hospital. However, the students become aware of and learn to appreciate resources that both they and their partners have for giving to and receiving from each other.

Instructional Phases. The following outline proposes phases in the integrative approach described above. Notes for instruction and assessment of SEL core competencies are given at each phase, referencing in italics the core competencies listed in Figure 1. Not every competency is equally applicable or relevant to every phase. Moreover, due to limited space and the unique requirements of every educational setting, instruction and assessment ideas are only brief and suggestive.

1. Planning. *Goal setting* is an integral part of the planning process, as is *analyzing situations*. Students work with the teacher to plan for the logistics of the project as a curriculum unit. Students assess issues of funding, time and materials, partnership development, creation of artwork, and factors that might influence individual responses to these questions. Students should appreciate how their short-term objectives can have long-term ramifications and learn ways to contour their aims and planning decisions to be both pro-social and practical.

Finally, SEL in art education should not be limited to service-learning projects, but should have a recurrent place in the traditional art curriculum, potentially whenever students' artistic expression of emotions and social issues are a focus. Interdisciplinary learning with other school subjects, such as social studies, provides another opportunity.

2. Personal Asset-Inventory. An obvious SEL characteristic to be developed in this phase is *recognizing strengths* as a component of self-awareness. Students learn what an asset-inventory involves and develop skills for identifying, appreciating, and taking ownership of their own resources. Students do an asset-inventory of themselves with special attention to resources previously unnoticed, disregarded, or degraded. In addition, pupils look for and reflect on issues that may hinder their owning and making the most of these assets. Because of the potential sensitivity of these inventories, students should not be required to share them with their peers, but should be encouraged to share them with a trusted adult, such as a teacher, counselor, or parent.

3. Teaching Collaborate-and-Creat. Students learn how to collaborate-and-creat, contrasting this method with other approaches, such as hero-on-a-horse and form-and-freedom (Figure 2). Instruction includes the study of prominent collaborate-and-creat examples in a variety of media-forms drawing clear distinctions with examples of other approaches. Some student learning focuses on the use of symbols and metaphor in art, especially in media that students are likely to use in the service-learning projects, such as murals, photography, and video. Postmodern as well as traditional modes of collaborative artmaking should be considered, such as installation and performance art. During this phase, students review prior learning by reflecting on how the collaborative method relates to practical and social objectives raised in phase one and what the students bring individually to the collaboration, explored in phase two. In anticipation of forthcoming learning, the objectives of phases four and five might be introduced in connection with the collaborative process.

4. Partners' Asset-Inventory. In this phase, students can work on *communication, perspective taking, appreciating diversity, respecting others, and building relationships*. Students learn practical methods for doing an asset-inventory with partners employing communication skills, which include listening to others and *expressing oneself through verbal and*

non-verbal means. Students dialogue with collaborators to inventory their cohorts' assets, employing learned skills. As an example, students would prepare to interview their partners by working with the teacher to develop a semi-structured interview for the first cohort meeting. If the partners are elderly, for instance, questions might start with the partners' interests at the age of the students. Afterward, stories of memorable events and people from the collaborators' past could be requested. In general, biographical data is sought to search out the collaborators' assets, including strengths of character and hard-earned wisdom, as well as talents and know-how. The inventory can also continue informally into phase 5. For example, the students and elderly partners could together identify a community interest, such as quilting, and create a quilt or quilts highlighting their common interests, goals, hopes, and dreams. Through the conversations and development of designs for the quilts, the students and partners would identify each other's assets through both verbal and visual means.

More generally, skills to be developed include *identifying and understanding the thoughts and feelings of others, appreciating diverse perspectives, treating others with kindness and compassion, and fostering healthy, rewarding connections to individuals and groups*. Instruction in these skills should include at minimum making them explicit issues for class discussion prior to and at summation of the inventory. These skills should also be reinforced in the phases that follow.

5. Creating Asset-Based Art. Conceiving, thinking through, and executing the artworks occur during this phase. The collaborative process, which will vary in duration and specifics from situation to situation, involves sorting through and reflecting on partners' resources and may include cohorts' recollections and visions for the future. *Problem solving*, and to some extent *negotiation strategies*, are employed to first narrow, then select, themes and qualities to present in the artworks. Brainstorming with sketches precedes, guides, or follows this process, or all three. The sketches are shared with

partners in dialogue mode, arriving at the final design that, importantly, considers time and budget restraints. Students execute artworks with or without the partners' direct participation. An important social-emotional objective for this phase is that the student *assumes personal responsibility* in seeing the process through.

6. Assessment and Reflection. In this phase, the teacher can address any or all of the SEL skills by assigning journal prompts specific to each competency. Student journals are an important tool for assessment and reflection throughout the unit. The competencies serve to identify skills to be developed and as a means for reflection. In addition, each skill can be a criterion for evaluation by its presence or absence and exhibited competence in the student. Methods for assessment and reflection in addition to journals can include group discussions and personal interviews.

7. Recognition. Students and partners should be formally recognized for their accomplishments. Several approaches could be utilized, including a recognition ceremony and an art exhibit. This process will serve to reinforce the SEL skills promoted throughout the unit as students feel good about their accomplishments and recognize their own abilities more fully.

Conclusion

The intent behind this article is to encourage teachers to explore ways SEL and art education can enhance each other. Service-learning art projects were presented as one example, employing collaborate-and-create, asset-based methods integrated with SEL instruction. Advantages anticipated from combining these methods result from students confronting social-emotional issues within community art tasks over an extended period of time (several-week unit). Because SEL skills to be developed in the unit are made explicit, they can be intentionally practiced and reflected on by the students in real time, authenticated by real situations, and purposely explored-expressed through artistic form. Social-emotional learning during this process may, in turn, increase the sophistication of content given form in the collaborative artworks. These dynamic circumstances would seem to be optimal for rich, long-lasting, and, perhaps, life-changing learning.

The conceptual framework described here for connecting SEL with art education certainly does not exhaust the numerous ways to realize this or similar learning. Moreover, the space of a single paper necessarily limits specifics of multifaceted projects, such as service-learning. Teachers will need to fill in the details of lessons, assessment, neighborhood logistics, and program evaluation to fit their particular students, schools, and communities.

Finally, SEL in art education should not be limited to service-learning projects, but should have a recurrent place in the traditional art curriculum, potentially whenever students' artistic expression of emotions and social issues are a focus. Interdisciplinary learning with other school subjects, such as social studies, provides another opportunity. The best results are most likely to occur where a school-wide program promoting SEL is adopted.

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