

Description of Collaborations  
Jefferson Elementary School  
Sue Ellen Turner, Classroom Teacher 4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Artist Teachers: Emily Kohring, Diane Davenport, Laurie Melnick

Teaching artists Emily Kohring, Diane Davenport and Laurie Melnick from Metro Theater Company collaborated with Ms. Sue Ellen Turner within the past two years on projects with her 4th and 5th graders closely aligned with history and communication arts. "Freedom, Oh Freedom, When you Gonna Come?" was our first Interchange collaboration. Ms. Turner expressed a need for her African-American students to feel a stronger connection to their past and believed that the arts are the appropriate vehicle for learning. Through an artistic exploration of this very important era in U.S. history, and the courage and sacrifice shown by individuals involved in the Civil Rights Movement, students gained an understanding of why citizens in a democracy must cherish their hard-won civil rights and continue to fight to protect them.

Last year we worked with Ms. Turner on the theme "Down the River." The students explored the novel, Tom Sawyer and used their knowledge from that story to further explore the history of the Mississippi River and its significance in St. Louis history. The Arts were integrated into lessons that stressed the folk idioms of the time. Creative dramatics were used to create tableaux. The students participated in reader's theater activities.

This collaboration was very successful because we genuinely had strong direction from Ms. Turner in how she wanted to see the themes connect to many content areas. Our team worked very well together and had very regular communication sessions. Each theme was started with the artist teachers, the classroom teacher and the students gathering together for a brain-storming session. The students told us what they wanted to learn. That helped us in designing our method of working. Ms. Turner was very eager to engage the students in Arts as well as writing activities when the artists were not there. As always, we would have liked more time for these explorations.

**Susan Grigsby, St. Louis Poetry Center**  
**Connie Berry, ESOL teacher, Mann Elementary**  
**Poetry and Animals - Winter 2009**

### Creative Collaboration

We explored in our collaboration the use of poetry - reading, writing, listening and speaking - in the ESOL classroom. We also incorporated visual art and creative movement into the residency work. The key ingredients to our success were co-planning, collaboration, and flexibility. Below are some of the practices that we found helpful.

### Communication Tips

Try to schedule the classes so that you'll have 5 to 10 minutes after class to review what worked and what needs to be done for the next class.

Always build in flexibility - build upon what works and new discoveries. If something doesn't work, learn from that and take a new approach. Have an open mind about stretching to reach higher goals even if you think it might be beyond your students. They may surprise you! Passion about something (in this case poetry) is a mighty motivator!

### Planning Tips

For TA's: Review any relevant text books, work books, lesson plans, etc. that the teacher has before the final brainstorming with the teacher as to ways to interweave/integrate your art into the lessons.

For CT's: Exchange contact information on the first meeting. Don't be afraid to contact your TA in between lessons for clarification/collaboration. Clarify your roll/participation in the lesson and be ready to participate! Discuss any special needs your students have with your TA and strategies that may help them in delivering the lessons. In our case, picture cues and dramatization was a necessity. Use a planner or calendar to mark lesson dates, check school calendar, and individual classroom events if the CT is a pull-out class. Be courteous and contact your TA if conflicts arise. Plan preferred contact for the TA in case of school closing during inclement weather.

### Co-Teaching and Classroom Management -

Have a clear idea of the rules - e.g. if a student asks to go to the restroom, do you tell them to ask the teacher, hand them a pass, etc,

Clarify and remind each other by e-mail of tasks that you've divided. For example, "you're getting the paint; I'm bringing the wood..."

If a student is disrespectful or disruptive, calmly correct them one on one and remind them that they are a part of a very special opportunity that you don't want them to miss out on. If you embarrass them, it will only isolate them from participating instead of pulling them back into the lesson. Your most disruptive students need this opportunity most of all. Maybe their true talent is dancing, art, or poetry.

Other wonderful aspects of our collaboration included -

If a child missed class or was slow on a project, the classroom teachers used other time to help that student catch up.

Key vocabulary was e-mailed by the TA to the CT several days prior to a session and the CT reviewed those words with the students in preparation for the TA visit. Picture cues were used to assist comprehension.

The CTs sometimes created additional poetry lessons in between sessions to work on with the students, created rubrics for some of the lessons, and furthered certain themes with additional projects such as studying geography and making maps to which poems about countries were attached. Cultural connections were made which showed students that we value their cultures.

## **Janie Ibur – St Louis Poetry Center**

### **Marissa Seuc - Stevens Middle School**

#### **Winter 2009 Collaboration**

At our initial meeting Marissa, Mr. Ragsdale the art teacher, Cecilia and myself talked about goals. Marissa and I wanted to bring poetry to these 7<sup>th</sup> graders that would be interesting, exciting, educating and relevant, and we wanted them to write poetry that would be meaningful to them while teaching them the skills of poetry and figures of speech. We also wanted them to create artwork in response to their writing and write poems in response to visual art. We hoped that they could work with Mr. Ragsdale to create art and have supervision in their art-making, but that part of the collaboration fell through for the most part. We did try for some classes to use projections of artwork I had, plus the artwork of Basquait, as Cecilia suggested. (Unfortunately we should have given a bio of him and connected him to them. They thought he was weird.) We wanted the students to be able to identify figures of speech and utilize them.

I wanted the students to know that education equals opportunity and hope. I also wanted them to learn that art, and in this case writing, particularly writing poetry, can be a great outlet for emotions instead of acting them out. For the first few weeks, I brought in poetry written specifically to them from the class of inmates I teach at the St. Louis County Department of Justice Services. In these poems, the men told how not paying attention prepared them for jail. No education gave them no choices. They have learned to express their stories for the first time in their lives. The same is probably true for these kids. We wanted to show them they have a voice and that their stories are valuable. Other measurable goals are improved writing skills, more comfort with and identification of figures of speech, staying focused and keeping their attention the entire class period, connecting their lives to poetry.

I used myself as an award-winning real live poet who through my own poems tells stories about my life. I use myself as an example of what they can do with their art and their life.

Marissa was a complete partner from the start. Our communication throughout was tremendous. We were able to meet before each class where she would brief me as to what she'd done as follow-up to last week's session. Her exercises and assignments extended what we touched on in our session while going deeper and breaking it down into measurable pieces. Her incorporation was amazing. I learned so much from her. We also had the luxury of this class being the last of the day so we were able to debrief, talk about what worked and what didn't, and plan ahead for the next week. All our efforts fit with and complimented the MAP standards and GLE's. Marissa maintained order which was challenging, but it was clearly her class and her students knew it.

Certain exercises the students preferred over others: personification – writing from the point of view of their house, then drawing it as real or abstract (those were wonderful and everyone did it); they all got into concrete poetry, another time they were able to really connect the art. Sonnets was a challenge and we struggled with it for at least 4-6 sessions breaking it apart, using examples of mine, working on rhyme over line length.

You would have thought Marissa and I had been doing this for years, we were so smooth. We danced a pas de deux with her modeling behind me concepts I'd be discussing. She'd invent poems on the spot, good ones, to further illustrate personification, simile and metaphor, alliteration, etc. I never remembered she was a first year teacher. I never remembered that we were close to 40 years apart in age. We were both open to and excited about collaboration. Our excitement never flagged, even though some things we tried didn't work and petered out: I'd wanted the kids to dialogue with the prisoners by exchanging poetry; we lost support for the art component early on and were unable to pick up that ourselves, though one student continued to make amazing art pieces. The kids were a challenge, their behavior and disrespect was frustrating and annoying, as was how much time we wasted on Marissa regaining control.

I had great fun working with Marissa. On days when I didn't feel up to par, Marissa had my back and her energy recharged me. I looked forward to our class. I think we reached a few. I think we were a great team, emphasis on team.

**Nancy Stopke - COCA Visual Artist  
Karen Evans - Henry Elementary 4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Quilting History – Winter 2009**

**Nancy Stopke**

During my initial meeting with Ms. Evans, she explained that her class was learning about famous African-Americans, specifically ones from this area. They were already researching and writing about the famous person assigned to them. I thought of the idea of creating a quilt of these famous people. Ms. Evans assigned each student a famous person by the time I got to the school for the first time. Since the students have computers at each desk, they were able to research facts about the people on the first day and also draw a picture to plan out what they will want their individual quilt blocks to look like. Throughout the rest of the collaboration, Ms. Evans and I worked together to solve problems that would arise, some of which would happen on the spot. While I worked with 2-3 students at a time at the sewing machines, Ms. Evans came up with the idea for the students to write a letter to their famous person. This really helped me because I could then focus on helping the students sew the quilt together rather than having to come up with more and more projects for them. This was a great collaboration, and I think it was because we communicated and because we both were able to be flexible and good problem solvers.

**Karen Evans**

Ms. Stopke and I had a wonderful working relationship, and the students responded with enthusiasm. We created a Black History Quilt Project, and used LOCAL famous Black People to highlight on our quilt. The students followed the Missouri Social Studies Standards of researching famous Missourians.....the Communication standards were adhered to by writing personal letters to their person they highlighted on the quilt. The students sewed, drew pictures, researched on the internet, and THEN presented their person on the square by sharing facts about their person. (Speaking from 3X5 cards) They also honed their computer skills by making a PowerPoint Presentation slide that contained pertinent data regarding their person.

## **Interchange Professional Development Workshop on Collaboration**

**Residency:** Using Persuasive Writing to Create Video PSA's

**Teaching Team:** Martin Koenig, English teacher at Vashon High School  
Allison Trombley, teaching artist in media arts (KDHX)

**Residency Timeframe:** January-May, 2009 (50 minutes each week for 16 weeks)

### **Residency Description**

This collaborative residency sought to strengthen and reinforce the students' skills in persuasive writing by teaching them to write and film public service announcements (PSA's). Teaching artist Allison Trombley suggested the use of video to connect topics, rhetorical mode, and audience to the students' own experiences. Students learned about media literacy, how to use a camera and frame a shot, how to write scripts for video, and how to create a clear and effective call to action. With guidance, they researched topics, crafted a call to action, and wrote and filmed their video PSA's. Split into teams, the students completed four short PSA's about herpes, teen pregnancy, the importance of music, and domestic violence that they wrote and shot themselves.

### **Communication and Planning**

There were two initial planning sessions, with several emails in between. The first helped identify the curricular areas to be integrated with media arts. The next meeting and the emails in between focused on an action plan to make the residency work. A weekly meeting time was designated and a calendar was set-up with weekly teaching objectives and activities. Before and after each class, the teaching team discussed the previous week, the next week, and any challenges that might be faced that particular day (illnesses, field trips, problems at home, etc.). Emails were sent 1-2 times each week updating lesson plans, sending resources to be shared with students, and checking in on homework and classroom progress. Though only an hour was spent together each week, Mr. Koenig knew what was coming and was better able to prepare his class, and Ms. Trombley understood exactly what they'd been studying that week when she came in to teach.

### **Co-Teaching**

The key to success for this residency was co-teaching. Before and during the residency, both teachers knew exactly what was trying to be accomplished. Mr. Koenig would interject examples from other areas of class and additional curricular connections while Ms. Trombley taught media concepts to the students. Throughout the week, he would drill them on what they had learned during the residency. Likewise, Ms. Trombley would make connections between writing for media and writing other types of communication. Mr. Koenig enabled the residency's success and encouraged student participation by touching upon media topics throughout the week, assigning homework for students who did not finish their writing in class, and dedicating non-residency class time to work on the PSA project. The work the students did for the Interchange residency was graded and considered as important as anything else they did, thereby elevating the project.

### **Classroom Management**

The class was a nice size, from 12-16 kids most meetings, and very well behaved. There were not any issues with discipline, management or respect, which is attributed to Mr. Koenig's great classroom management. Mr. Koenig welcomed the students each day, asked them to get ready to work, and handed out special notebooks for their assignments. This prepared the students and kept everything rolling smoothly. Had there been an issue in classroom management, Ms. Trombley would have deferred to his experience with the students and asked him to take the lead in resolving the issue.

### **Challenges, Strengths, and Hindsight**

One of the greatest challenges for Mr. Koenig was getting students to attend class and complete work. This residency gave students something to look forward to, a break from their everyday routine, and a way to think about applying what they learned everyday to the real world. Attendance was much higher on residency days than on other days of the week, and for the first time all year, perfect attendance was achieved on the project's research day. There were still issues with some students handing in work, but when they realized they couldn't go forward without it, they began to participate and hand in assignments. Though not always on time, this still represented an improvement. Another challenge was absences. Students would miss whole chunks of learning, but because there were two adults, we were able to catch students up and provide them with an important role, even if it was modified. Peer mentoring was also employed once we got to shooting, which helped greatly. The biggest strength of this residency was Mr. Koenig and his willingness to be open, to try new methods, and to take a chance on a new way of learning. His enthusiasm and openness carried over into the students, who showed up excited, ready to learn, and ended up proud of their work. In hindsight, we learned that we should have structured the filming differently to make it go more smoothly, but this is something we now know for next time.

### **Student Reflection**

"Making a PSA was fun, but hard work at the same time. There's a lot of things that need to be said and someone could create a PSA to get the messages across."

"A PSA is short with a call to action and a commercial is trying to sell something."

"One thing that I learned that I might use again in my life is to persuade someone to do something and why they should do it. I will use it whenever I want my mother or father to let me do something, or whenever I am trying to warn someone about something..."

"The most important thing I learned is that you have to always be prepared for the unexpected things to happen because when filming, you have a lot of interruptions and would mess up, but you have a deadline so you have to stay on task."

"Partnership [was the most important thing learned]. I will use it when I have a career."

"My favorite part was being able to work with people and being able to write my own scripts."