

Community Puzzle Art Activity

Students will create a large, shared jigsaw puzzle of their class community. This activity is designed to both build on arts' skills as well as encourage thoughtful creativity and reflection about belonging to a community. Students will reflect on ideas of personal identity and shared community, whilst they complete the activity.

Students will create their own puzzle piece which will be pieced together in a shared community space. Each puzzle piece will represent what students bring to their community to enrich it.

This is also a collaborative project as students will need to work with their puzzle piece neighbours to complete their designs.

In Preparation

1. Create large puzzle piece blanks using an online resource, such as <https://timvandevall.com/make-your-own-jigsaw-puzzle-templates/>.
2. Select a puzzle that has the correct number or a few more pieces to match the class. Extra pieces can be decorated by pairs of students who finish their own pieces early.
3. The pieces should be around 25-30cm square and printed on heavy paper.
4. Print a copy of the complete puzzle and number each piece. Number the corresponding pieces of the large pieces the students will work on. This will allow students to know where their piece will go and who they are next to.
5. You will need to prepare a space for the final puzzle and consider what you will mount it on. It is important that it is visually unified rather than a series of artworks next to one another.
6. You may just print templates of the pieces and have the students cut them out.
7. Decide if there will be any limiting style or design choices you will implement, i.e.
 - a. Only using black fine liners
 - b. Use of collage, from books, coloured card or recycled materials
 - c. Limited palette et.



Design Dialogue

To help students to think about their design have a brief dialogue about the theme.

When asking questions, it is important to stay **neutral** and **curious** about the responses. Students can often look to you for hints about what to say and it's important that they are not influenced in their responses and that they share genuinely felt ideas. Always be sure to ask why students think something and gently ask follow-up questions that elicit more thinking. Try to think about their responses from different perspectives and ask, “*what if ...?*” kinds of questions.

As they brainstorm, take notes on the board so that students have something to refer to and this also shows value for their ideas. Students are also encouraged to keep notes in their own art journals.

The following questions are a starting place for this dialogue.

1. You are creating designs that represent what you bring to our community to enrich it.
2. You can create ‘realistic’ designs or abstract ones.
3. What types of things do we bring to a community? (ideas, energy, values, perspectives).
4. Are there any things that we think make us unique, that we might represent in our art?

Puzzle Piece Design

1. Students are given a puzzle piece to work on.
2. They sketch a rough plan of what they would like to create in their visual diary.
3. Students then lightly rough out their designs on their pieces.
4. They then share their designs with the students whose pieces are next to theirs so that they can overlap their designs where they need to. This requires thoughtful, collaborative spirit.
5. Students then complete their own pieces using their design ideas, colouration etc. including on the parts that are in their neighbour's design. Effectively this will mean that the linking parts of the pieces will have two creators, the person who created the design and the person who brought it to life.
6. Once the pieces are finished the puzzle can be completed!

Reflection

The class should take time to reflect on this activity once it's complete. This allows them to consider their actions and the way they worked as a community.

Whilst sitting in front of the completed puzzle ask the students to consider the following questions.

Are you happy with the results of our artwork?

Did you find parts of this activity challenging?

What things were challenging?

How did you feel about sharing personal feelings in your work?

What was it like to collaborate with others?

Did you find it easy to talk to others?

Did you listen well to others?

Did you feel like others listened to you?

What do you think is successful about this final piece?

Does the final mural represent our community? Why?

Some Examples

From 2009 Teen Arts Festival at Brookdale Community College

