

# AEI Lesson Example, Flexibility & Adaptability

## Visual Arts Lesson Plan Title: Brush Yourself Off

*(Note: While this lesson plan illustrates the intentional teaching of Flexibility & Adaptability, it is not representative of the Exemplar from the Visual Arts in the Iowa Core website.)*

### Age Group: Middle School

In the table below are the Visual Arts Standards and the Universal Constructs. Check the ones covered in the lesson.

Standards Adapted from NAEA Standards 	Understand, select & apply media, techniques & processes	Understand and apply elements and principles of design	Students will consider, select, apply and evaluate a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.	Understand the visual arts in relation to history and culture	Reflect upon and assess the characteristics of their own and other's work	Students will make connections between the visual arts, other disciplines and daily life
<b>Universal Constructs</b> 						
Critical Thinking	X	X	X	X	X	
Complex Communication						
Creativity	X	X	X			
Collaboration						
Flexibility & Adaptability	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>			
Productivity & Accountability	X	X				

### District, Building, or Department Goals or Objectives:

To be determined by the specific teacher implementing the lesson plan.

**Description:** Students will use unconventional means to recreate an evocative and expressive self-portrait. While the primary materials are familiar to students, acrylic paint and canvas, other material options can be employed and are described in the “Materials” section of this lesson plan. The students will be forced to adapt and in their own strategies and style as they will be limited by not being able to paint this self-portrait with paint brushes. Through a combination of their hands, palette knives, and sticks (the end of old paint brushes), students will create expressive self-portraits in a more gestural and loose manner. Students will create new hues of color by mixing paint at a more impromptu pace, often being encouraged to mix their paints directly on top of the painting surface.

### Teacher Preparation:

Make sure all materials and electronic resources (ppt and website) are prepped and ready. Of special importance, make sure a demonstration canvas (or canvas board) is ready for demonstration purposes. A photo-portrait is necessary to have on hand to demonstrate initial drawing and any subsequent digital manipulations. (It is up to individual teacher to handle any scanning and manipulation in Adobe Photoshop. These manipulations very well may help students block out “chunks” of color to include in their self-portraits’ rendering.)

### **Materials and Resources Needed:**

Students must bring in photos of themselves. These will be used to draw from. Students may bring their own photos, or take photos in class using teacher’s digital camera. A way to upload and print these photos is necessary. To make the project more challenging, encourage students to draw from observation by using mirrors.

Painting surface. (With older, more advanced middle school students, one could try stretching canvases [Unprimed canvas, 24” and 36” stretcher bars, staple guns and staples]; other options include canvas boards, cardboard, illustration board, masonite, or even a heavy weight, multi-purpose paper.)

Flat latex wall paint (black) for priming painting surface

White Conte Crayon (white pastel, white charcoal, chalkboard chalk would also work) for drawing

Palette knives

Old stiff paintbrushes (only needed for their handles... detail work)

Assorted 8 oz jars of Liquitex Basics acrylic paint

One clean plastic coffee container per student (with lid)

Paint shirts

Plastic wrap (optional)

### **Vocabulary:**

*Including only terms that may be new to this age group. Terms like “self-portrait” are not included as they should be prior knowledge for middle school students.*

Gestural

Impressionistic

Expressionistic

Fauvism

Optical color mixing

Impasto

**Plan: Days are listed merely as guidelines. Students and teachers should feel free to work at a faster or slower pace.**

1. Day 1: Introduce accompanying pptx and discuss Expressionism and various stylistic takes on portrait painting. Discuss optical mixing, unusual expressive palettes, gestural painting applications, and stylized notions of rendering. The work of Philip Burke is especially swift at highlighting all these concepts. Introduce rubric. Show [Brien Olsen: Art in Action](#) video (also hyperlinked in pptx).
2. Days 2-3: Make sure students provide an expressive photo of themselves. Have a digital camera and means of printing ready as a backup plan. Demonstrate how to prep painting surface (could be stretching canvases and priming with black paint or just priming a surface [options listed below in "Materials] with the same black paint) and how to draw the self-portrait from the photo onto the surface (done with a choice of white drawing media). Stress accurate depictions, proper proportions, and good sense of composition.
3. Days 4-6: Students begin painting with only their hands and fingers. All mixing should be done quickly and in a gestural (not over mixed) manner. Colors should be allowed to exist without becoming too blended. Encourage students to work quickly... big, bold movements on the surface. Mixing new hues directly on the canvases and forgoing the use of the palette (repurposed plastic coffee containers) should be modeled and encouraged.
4. Days 7-9: Students are now allowed to move into painting with palette knives. At this point, their strategies and style of handling the paint should change. What can a knife turned on its edge do that a fingertip or palm can't? Should certain areas be reworked? Should some be elevated? Despite the evolution to painting with a tool, all mixing and painting should still be done with a gestural quality as before.
5. Day 10-11: As this project winds down, students are allowed two class periods to add any last minute touches... details. Students may now use the handles of old paintbrushes to scrape and dab paint. Again, encourage students to reevaluate their system of working and encourage them to evolve as their tools change. This final step is the only time that gestural concerns can be overwhelmed by more meticulous methods.
6. Day 12: May realistically only need one half-period to critique the assignment. The last part of the class could (if students do not take the entire class to discuss) serve to introduce the new upcoming assignment. Students will discuss their work in small groups and then in a larger context. Students should think about the strengths and weaknesses of their piece and in their classmates' work as well. Special attention should be given (teacher facilitates this) to reflecting upon how the unusual approach to mark making and tool usage steered the overall form of the work. This question really gets at the heart of how students wrestle with their own expectations, limitations, and adaptations.

**Assessment:**

Please see attached rubric

The attached assessment can and should be used both as a student-self assessment and as the teacher summative assessment for the project. Additional questions can be devised and added for students to address in the “student comments” field.

**Follow Up Activities:**

In subsequent painting activities, students mix tints and shade before applying to painting surface...and they use brushes! I’ve found this initial acrylic painting makes for more bold and sophisticated student palettes.

**Resources and References:**

Please see attached pptx

<http://brianolsenart.com/visuals/videos>

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