In this art history class, student art duplicates famous art

Seminar for the 21st Century: The Touchstones approach

by Howard Zeiderman

The international educator understands the importance of making students adaptable, flexible thinkers and clear, powerful communicators in today’s global community. Touchstones Discussion Project’s unique seminar method, developed for easy use in any classroom, helps students become independent learners, collaborative communicators, and effective leaders.

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Garrett Held, Teacher, Bucks County, PA

For more information on our innovative, easy-to-implement educational method, contact Touchstones at 1-800-456-6542 or visit our website at www.touchstones.org.

Touchstones Discussion Project

In 2009, Touchstones celebrates 25 years of classroom success. Order now through March to receive special anniversary pricing on all volumes series and on-site professional development workshops.

For fifth-graders at the American School of Aachen, learning art history is their favorite lesson of the year. They especially like this three-part project.

1) Research: In groups of 4, students spend one class looking for a famous painting to re-create. It is best to look for a single subject with a vertical background (though we have done multiple people in a picture). At the end of the class, they should have an art piece, artist, title, and date. Generally, all information is found on the website www.archives.com.

2) Painting: In the second art class, students must paint a background in the same color and style as the picture they have chosen. When each group of four, this can be done in one hour.

3) Posing with props: In the third art class, students bring any props found in the original painting that were not incorporated into the backdrop. Finally, they must choose one person in the group to be the model. Clothing should be as accurate as possible to the original.

The teacher can take the pictures, post them next to the original piece of art and voila...art history comes alive! The final pictures are displayed and viewed at the annual Art Exhibition via a PowerPoint presentation for all to see.

(When you look at the two paintings on the left, can you tell which is the student’s and which is the artist’s?)

Report on US online learning

The North American Council for Online Learning has released the third in a series of annual reports on the status of online learning nationally, writes cEdHous News. “Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning” looks at two areas of virtual schooling: state-led online programs and state-level policies governing online education, and the ways that the two intersect. The report states that online learning continued to grow in school year 2007-2008, both in the number of new programs and the improvement of existing programs, and many states have passed new legislation to promote further growth.

Given this expansion, the study issues these policy recommendations: the creation of national content standards; the inclusion of online instruction practices in teacher college curricula; the revision of district accounting measures that take into account the particulars of virtual schooling; and the establishing of standard metrics for basic quality assurance, such as consistent measures for course completions. Currently 44 states offer significant online student learning opportunities.