

Random Acts of Kindness has brought more meaning into my life, and I am committed to help spread the word.

— Carol, State Parent Facilitator, HI

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These Lesson Plans are a culmination of school-wide activities and classroom activities, ranging from grades K-12.

Lesson Plan

Papier-Mâché Retirement Buddies

Submitted by Karen; Fort Dodge, IA

Scope of Activity: Classroom and Community

Grade Level:

Any age from 3rd grade-12th grade can participate in this project.

Time to complete:

- About 4-5 days (45 minutes periods) to make the sculpture.
- 1 day to write a reflection
- 1-2 days to share reflections with the classmates for those who so desire

Materials Needed:

1. Balloons and newspapers
2. Masking or other strong tape
3. Wheat paste (wallpaper paste or glue-water mixture)
4. Coffee or similar empty cans
5. Tempera or acrylic paints
6. Brushes
7. Scrap material and odds and ends such as buttons
8. Cotton or other materials such as yarn for the hair
9. Paper on which to write reflections-Pens

Step by Step Directions Review:

- Establish a relationship with a local retirement center or nursing home facility.
- Each student gets to know at least one resident by talking and sharing things about one another over a period of a few weeks.
- Plan and make a papier-mâché retirement buddy with these steps:
 1. Study and talk about facial characteristics.
 2. Build the armature for the sculpture from a blown-up balloon or crushed newspaper.

3. After the armature is formed, use wheat paste (or a glue/water mixture) to dip strips of newspaper in to form around the armature.
4. When dry, paint and add features/details such as hair, clothing and accessories.
5. Give “buddies” at the retirement center the papier-mâché buddies to keep.
6. Watch reactions of both students and retirement citizens.
7. Have the students reflect (by journalizing) upon the joy they felt when they gave a part of themselves to another person. Have them reflect how they perceived the retirement citizens felt when receiving an unexpected portrait of themselves.
8. Continue to visit the retirement center citizens to continue the relationship formed.

Community Ties:

This project builds strong community ties. People have heard about this project within a ninety-mile radius. (News travels fast when it affects the lives of others.)

Subject Areas Involved:

- Writing and Reading Skills
- Interpersonal Skills/Community Building
- Science (the aging process)
- Art

National Standards:

Students describe and compare a variety of individual responses to their own art works and to art works from various eras and cultures.

Students describe and compare a variety of feelings (via journalizing) to their presentation of the works of art to the retirement buddies. (Random Acts of Kindness)

The benefits of this lesson are many. Students are made aware of the value of other generations of people. They are able to feel the experience and joy of giving of oneself without expecting anything in return as well as to feel and see the joy on the retirement center buddies’ faces, which they work with. In this mobile society where many students do not interact with grandparents that may live thousands of miles away, this experience is invaluable for the students. In the same light, many of the residents of the center do not have contact with family members because of distance, or simply not having any living relatives. So, consequently, my students are the only children they interact with.

Senior citizens are often neglected as a valued part of society. Because retired citizens are an important part of our community; I want my students to relate to them. There is much to be learned from other generations that can’t be learned in any other way. Once a month I’ve had my students visit the retirement center in our community. We take art that we have made and hang it on the residents’ doors to brighten their environment. The students enjoy the residents, and this way, they learn to realize that aging is a natural process.

The students have begun to really “know” the people at the retirement center. Many of the residents think of my students as their “buddies” and refer to them as that. My students feel so strongly about their ties with their retirement buddies, that they wanted to do something extra special for them.

We decided to make papier-mâché portraits of our retirement home buddies. The results were very satisfying.

As we began the projects, we discussed the differences in facial characteristics. What makes an older person’s face different from a younger person’s face? We even got into a discussion about computer enhancing and aging a person’s face to make it appear five to ten years older. The pull of gravity and aging of skin can cause wrinkles, elongation of ears, noses etc. Bone structure also changes from a young baby to an older person.

After discussing facial characteristics, we were ready to build the armature for our sculptures. Some of my students used crunched up newspapers to form the heads, and others used a blown up balloon. Whatever the head was formed from, when it was finished, we taped it to a coffee can for support. This would later become part of the sculpture. Ears and noses were made with crumpled newspaper and taped securely to the face with masking tape.

When the armature had been shaped, strips of newspaper dipped in a wheat paste mixture were applied to the base and smoothed over. The can was also covered in the newspaper/wheat paste mixture. The second layer of newspaper was purposely left rough in some spots to serve as wrinkles later on.

After allowing the wheat paste to dry, we painted the heads various shades of flesh tones. We used tempera and acrylic paints. Next, the eyes were painted to match the eye color of the buddy being depicted. Some of the students made the eyes from small Styrofoam balls, which were placed in eye sockets.

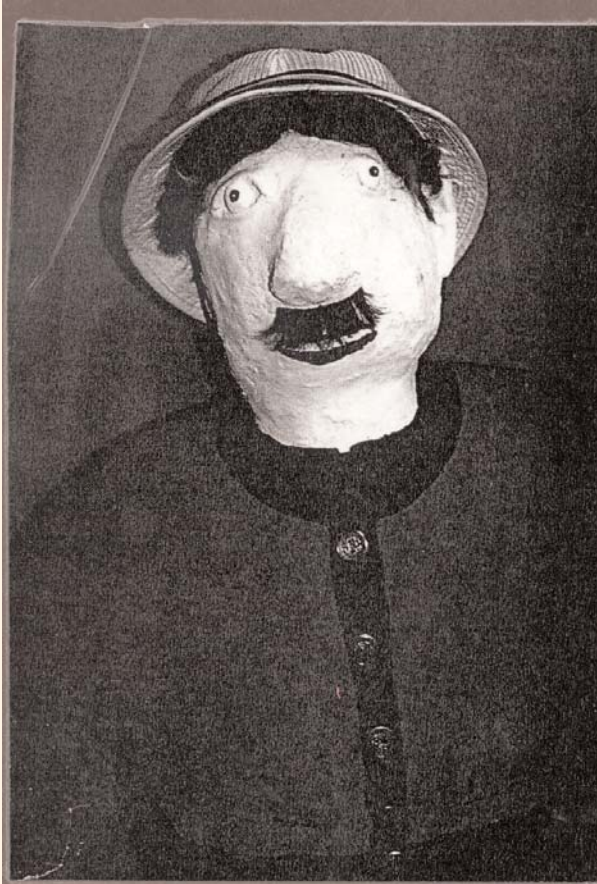
The next step was to make hair. We used yarn, old nylon stuffing, and cotton batting to form the hairstyles. We tinted the hair by rubbing ground -up colored chalk on the cotton to match the different hair colors of the buddies.

The students considered every little detail, including beards and mustaches. If their retirement buddy sported a mustache or beard, their papier-mâché portrait sported one as well. Clothing, hats, scarves, etc., were added from scrap material. These items were sewn and glued in place.

When we took the sculptures to the retirement center to present them to the residents, the students paid particular attention to the different kinds of responses. It was interesting for me to compare the responses of the classmates, residents and staff. For the students, the process of creation was just as important as the finished product. However, the delight on the students’ faces was apparent when they saw the buddies’ reactions. The buddies were so overjoyed and delighted with the sculptures. They couldn’t believe they got to keep them!

When we returned to the classroom, I had the students write their feelings about giving the mach? projects to their buddies. Their answers were so introspective. They felt good about making another person happy...even when it meant giving away their sculpture, which had taken lots of work.

We have seen our creations in the residents' rooms decorated for all occasions. Sometimes they have Christmas lights strung around them, sometimes there's a festive hat on top of the head, and many times the season is apparent by the re-decoration of the sculpture. It's great to see the residents show some spirited enthusiasm. One man remarked, " It's wonderful to get to be a kid again!" What better testament to what random acts of kindness can do for a person!



EXAMPLES OF RETIREMENT BUDDIES

MADE BY 5TH-6TH GRADERS