



Creativity

Criticism and Communication

Recipient of the
Certificate of Merit
Ms. CHENG Woon-wah
(Years of Teaching : 15 years)

School
Shau Kei Wan Government
Secondary School

Teaching Targets
Secondary 1 to Secondary 5
(Visual Arts)

Beliefs of Teaching

"Teaching Visual Arts for me is teaching beyond mere subject knowledge. I emphasize the '3C' generic skills: creativity, criticism and communication in order to develop competencies transferable to other aspects of life and serve life-long processes important to students' lives."



Interview with the Teacher

"I encourage students to do more research, see more, know more, and widen their spectrum of life in order to cultivate creativity." Creativity, Criticism and Communication are the "3C" generic skills, Ms. CHENG Woon-wah, Anne emphasized in her teaching of Visual Arts.

She encourages students to think critically. She thinks that criticism can be made on the works of famous artists as well as students' artworks. The first step is to describe the artwork in students' own way before going to the next step of expressing their attitude, be it like or dislike towards the artwork. The final step is to make interpretations of the artwork through comparing and criticizing.

At the beginning of the lesson, Ms. CHENG would take about 5 minutes to walk around the classroom to see what information students had collected for the lesson. It can also draw students' awareness, telling them the lesson has begun and they are all in her attention. 'Once a student came to me excitedly and told me that he's going to show me something excellent in class. This shows how they enjoy and devote to the lesson.' Ms. CHENG would also arouse their sense of identity of the class by praising the whole class for their spirit and performance.

Art Classes usually pay heavy emphasis on doing coursework. However, Ms. CHENG would only

assign about two pieces of coursework to the students each year. She would spend half of the time on coursework, and the other half of the time on communication and criticism. In this way, she hopes her students can do more research, know more about the artwork they are going to produce, and discuss and brainstorm on how to do it.

Having more understanding on the subject that they are going to work on would stimulate their emotion towards it, thus could produce an artwork with deeper meaning. While producing the artwork, Ms. CHENG would encourage students to criticize and comment on each other's artwork. She would not make her comment at first, but would let students express their own feelings before she gave her comment. This also provided students chances to think, express and criticize, which further cultivated their critical thinking skills.

Let students know which area to improve, and encourage them to improve

"Creativity is developed by seeing more, being able to observe and criticize." Therefore, Ms. CHENG would bring students to many different exhibitions, or art related events or competitions. "These days, information technology is so advanced that you may get almost any information and knowledge from the internet. However, the most important thing is whether you would take action to search for the information, and whether you are able to organize the information you have got. Actually, this way of

learning also facilitates students' study in other subjects."

Ms. CHENG designed a detailed assessment form for the students, listing six to seven criteria for students to know how well they performed in each area. "For senior secondary students, I would not just give a general mark for them, instead I would breakdown the rating into different aspects. Detailed assessment could help students check which area they performed well and in which area they needed improvements, and therefore showing them directions to improve."

For junior secondary students, some of them are quite shy to speak up. It seemed to be a problem for Ms. CHENG to ask them to communicate. "Some of the junior secondary students were too shy to express themselves. However, I would still encourage them to talk. If they could utter a word, I help them put it into a sentence; if they could say a sentence, I help them to develop into a paragraph. Then they could get to know the skills of expressing themselves."

Moreover, clapping hands is also a simple but effective technique Ms. CHENG would use as a signal to arouse the whole class to appreciate others' works. All these create an encouraging learning atmosphere for the students, and build up their self-confidence.

Students are encouraged to criticize and comment each other's artwork





Students gain the greatest benefit in both subject knowledge and creativity when they have time to thoroughly explore each theme.

Teacher's Sharing

Beliefs

Teaching Visual Arts for me is teaching beyond mere subject knowledge. I emphasize the “3C” generic skills: creativity, criticism and communication in order to develop competencies transferable to other aspects of life and serve life-long processes which are important to students’ lives.

Teaching Practice

Comprehensive teaching and learning

I emphasize the integration of appreciation, criticism and art making through a number of elements, including facilitating students to understand the socio-historical context, and apply appropriate critical thinking and interpretation at different levels, which in turn back up their communication skills in expressing their views. I find this way of integrating appreciation and criticism effective for students to engage in Visual Arts learning, as shown in the depth of their artwork. I adopt a variety of teaching strategies and enhance the effectiveness of teaching through good use of the “Motivation and Rewards” and “Emotions and Learning” theories.

In-depth learning and teaching

In recent years, I deliberately cut down the number of topics covered in the syllabus but instead focused

on fewer topics in greater depth. I find that students gain the greatest benefit in both subject knowledge and creativity when they have time to thoroughly explore each theme. For instance, in the Secondary 3 syllabus, the theme "Hong Kong Pop Art Culture: Comics" is broken down into seven parts so that students can probe into the theme in a systematic way.

A comprehensive way of assessment

Students are bound to have different abilities. Hence, it makes sense for us to design more comprehensive assessment so that students can identify their abilities and areas for improvement more easily. Apart from assessing the final product, I take into account of students’ performance during different stages. For instance, in the theme "A Blessing for Hong Kong" in the Secondary 4 syllabus, I assessed students’ performance in the following areas: research, ability in appreciation and criticism, oral presentation, written report, idea development, drafts and the finished artwork.

Topics in the context of daily life experiences

To foster students’ interest in their immediate surroundings, I attempt to incorporate important events, social issues, and people into the themes in the syllabus. A good example is the sculpture

making unit with the theme in remembrance of a fowl killed by avian flu in the Secondary 1 syllabus, which involves a discussion of the cause and effects of the avian flu outbreak. This helps to bring out students’ intrinsic motivation, as the theme chosen will relate to them in one way or another.

Life-wide learning

In addition to formal learning in the classroom, I emphasize on out-of-school learning. The Quality Education Fund is a good funding source; our school applied for it previously to develop ceramic interests. I encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities, get in touch with local artists and join in events organized by various organizations. All these activities not only enable students to broaden their horizons but also empower them to engage in meaningful creativity that could act as a contribution to the community. For instance, the event “Clifford Chance Visual Memoirs”, organized by the Youth Art Foundation, enabled students to learn about the personal histories of the elderly in nursing homes. They created visual representations of the oral histories using paintings. The artworks were printed on calendars which were presented to the elderly as souvenirs.



In addition to exhibiting students’ artwork, the Art Exhibition also trained students’ cooperation.



Summary of Assessment

The effective use of “Motivation and Rewards” and “Emotions and Learning” to enhance teaching



Students' masterpieces of 'Phone Booths'

Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice

A teaching exemplar of “A Blessing for Hong Kong” Paper Cutting can be downloaded from the EMB through www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=2715&langno=2

Preferred Way of Dissemination

Public dissemination and discussion

Contact

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Ms. CHENG has developed a student-oriented curriculum for the subject of Visual Arts. In her opinion, successful Visual Arts teaching should not only impart subject knowledge to students, but also develop their “3C” abilities, viz, creativity, criticism and communication, and keep abreast of curriculum development, i.e. emphasizes both art making and critical art appreciation in context. Ms. CHENG attaches importance to developing her students into self-directed learners who know how to learn, arousing their interest in learning by selecting topics that relate to their daily life, and actively promoting life-wide learning to broaden their artistic horizons. By employing a thematic approach in teaching she has guided her students to learn by inquiry and thus deepened their learning.

Ms. CHENG has an appealing teaching style. She optimizes teaching by employing diversified teaching strategies and applying principles like “Motivation and Reward”, “Emotion and Learning”, etc. to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Ms. CHENG conducts her lessons in a pleasurable and relaxed manner, always wearing a smile, speaking with good intonation and using appropriate body language. She employs diversified assessment methods effectively to facilitate “assessment for learning”, and has provided timely feedback to her students so that they know their strengths and weaknesses for making improvements. Her assessment is holistic, covering not only the students' finished artworks, but also the information prepared at various stages, idea development, verbal and written reports, sketches, etc.

Ms. CHENG had prepared adequately and conscientiously for the observed lesson. The lesson went on smoothly with plentiful interaction, displaying meticulously planned classroom activities. The students were enthusiastic in the creative activities and were able to contribute to the conclusion process. Prompted by a countdown clock, time control was extremely precise.



Criticism can be made on famous artists' works as well as students' artworks.