This paper proposes a collaborative processing model for art education that draws upon the language and learning theories of Lev S. Vygotsky. This model is a means by which students' natural affinity for socialization and inclination to attend to their own personal agendas may be used to increase learning motivation and effectiveness. The model may be used to enhance collaboration skills related to the processing of information and the construction of knowledge. Although this strategy has been specifically developed to augment information processing skills related to artistic creation and critique, it was designed with full recognition that these functions are subsumed under the rubric of general cognitive construction. Additional (albeit incidental) advantages of the model include development of socialization skills and cross-cultural awareness and appreciation. A suggested outline for teaching from this model is included, as is a 16-item bibliography. (Author/DB)
SOCIALIZATION, LEARNER INTENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTELLECTUALISM: A TRANSACTIONAL MODEL OF ART EDUCATION

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A COLLABORATIVE PROCESSING MODEL FOR ART EDUCATION

In this paper I propose a collaborative processing model for art education which draws upon the language and learning notions of Lev S. Vygotsky. This model is a means by which students' natural affinity for socialization and inclination to attend to the personal agenda may be capitalized upon for the purpose of learning. It may be used to enhance collaboration skills related to the processing of information and the construction of knowledge. Although this strategy has been specifically developed to augment information processing skills related to artistic creation and critique, it was designed with full recognition that these functions are subsumed under the rubric of general cognitive construction. Additional (albeit incidental) advantages include development of socialization skills and cross-cultural awareness and appreciation.

SOCIALIZATION AND EDUCATION

That humans are social creatures goes almost without saying. One needs only to look to the formation of personal opinions and attitudes to recognize that how we think is influenced by our relationships with those around us. Noting this principle, Vygotsky has suggested that
learning, indeed all learning, is socially mediated. That is, the process of making sense of the world is shaped and molded by one's interactions with, and perceptions of, one's environment. He argued that learning is initiated through interaction with the environment, notably with parents, siblings, peers, and teachers. Cultural tools (e.g., various forms of symbols -- written, spoken, drawn, sculpted etc.) are used first to mediate our interactions with each other and, later, with practice, to mediate interactions within ourselves. As we internalize their use, these tools help us to think. From a Vygotskian perspective, mastery of the cultural tools (e.g., conscious awareness and proficient manipulation of symbols) is fundamental to our capacity for independent intellectual activity -- what Vygotsky called "higher psychological functions."

If, as Vygotsky has suggested, all cognitive construction is socially mediated, then it is clearly counterproductive to insist that students engage in cognitive exercises which have not been designed with respect to relative social and personal context(s). Although art education remains at the forefront of experientially based pedagogy, there is little evidence to indicate that social mediation as a fundamental component of the construction of meaning in art has received specific attention. Yet, art provides an ideal opportunity for the erudition of Vygotsky's "higher psychological functions."
functions," or what Bloom (1956) might refer to as the processes of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Elsewhere in the curriculum, cooperative learning models developed by Slavin (1977a,b;1978), Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, and Roy (1984), and others are widely practiced approaches which systematically draw upon student socialization for educative purposes. The objectives of these models are primarily affective in nature, and, if exercised judiciously, results can be significant. However, as Slavin (1988) has implied, they are clearly not an educational catholicon. Indeed, as an information processing device, existing cooperative learning models are rather ineffectual. Popular designs have, for the most part, failed to acknowledge the functions of student interaction and intentionality as rudimentary components in the construction of meaning. While cooperative learning approaches seem to facilitate the development of affective skills, few efforts have been made to take advantage of their collaborative nature for the explicit purpose of knowledge construction.

LEARNER INTENTIONALITY: THE TRUE MOTIVATOR

Another issue, that of learner intentionality, has been inadequately addressed. The proponents of popular instructional
plans, including interactive models such as cooperative learning, typically fail to identify the learner's intent as the impetus behind knowledge construction. This is evident by the fact that it is still the teacher who typically determines what is to be taught and decides, in advance, what shall be learned. Moreover, we remain convinced that it is the teacher, not the student, who decides when, to what extent, and by what means knowledge will be acquired. Apparently, long standing interactionist notions of the student as active learner have not, within the paradigm, been applied to the function of intentionality. The notion that motivation is something which is done to learners, rather than by them, seems archaic when considered within this context. Yet, such notions persist. Educators continue to speak of ways in which students can be motivated instead of ways in which students motivate themselves.

Alternative views of the function of learner intent, based on the works of Peirce (1929) and Vygotsky, have been posited by Neisser (1976); Harste, Woodward, & Burke (1984); and Scibior (1984), among others. Transactionalist theory contends that learners most assuredly bring their own intentions and interests to any learning situation. Of course, these intentions and concerns have been, and continue to be, influenced by the environment. From a functionalist perspective, learner intent
is pivotal in the process of defining one's world -- it is, in essence, the driving force.

The totality of any particular learner's intentions and concerns may be viewed as his/her personal agenda. Attending to this agenda is such a compelling drive that conflicts between it and the "school" agenda easily account for a majority of all student/teacher disputes. Failure of students to attend to the task at hand or to behave as instructed (e.g., to conform to the "school" agenda) is among the most often cited teacher complaints. It is my contention that the extent to which formal learning activities are embraced by students is the extent to which the teacher and students have managed to align their respective agendas. Conversely, the extent to which students resist or sabotage learning activities can be viewed as representative of the degree to which the school curriculum and student intentionality have failed to merge.

The relatively few models which simultaneously draw upon Vygotskian notions of socialization and the role of student intent in the construction of meaning are, understandably, language arts based. An example is Harste's (1988) Authoring Cycle, a reading-writing model which maximizes student intentionality and collaboration for educative purpose. Students emulate publishing authors in virtually every way after the Brunerian notion that "the
schoolboy learning physics is a physicist, and it is easier for him to learn physics behaving like a physicist than doing something else" (Bruner, 1960). It is Harste's Authoring Cycle which has served as the basis for development of the Collaborative Processing Cycle of Art Education. Before turning to a discussion of the model, an important prerequisite merits attention. Establishment of a safe yet intellectually stimulating environment necessarily precludes implementation of any design to be based upon sincere collaboration and student intentionality.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A SAFE YET INTELLECTUALLY STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT

Safety and Intellectual Stimulation

In the past, "safety" has been misconstrued to mean acceptance, if not celebration ad nauseam, of whatever utterance might be issued by a student. In truth, such practices create anti-intellectual environments which lack vigor and authenticity. They are not conducive to the kind of vital intellectual jousting which maximizes cognitive stimulation and psychological growth. Safety needn't be synonymous with anti-intellectualism. Indeed, while such an environment may seem immediately safe, there is nothing
It is essential that teachers do not permit the notion of environmental safety to be regarded as a panacea. Comfort without intellectual stimulation hardly serves educative purpose. Creation of a safe yet intellectually stimulating environment is a goal which is both essential and realistic. Moreover, it is entirely possible to maximize student socialization and intentionality toward the enhancement of learning within such an environment. However, this sort of undertaking requires at least three prerequisite conditions. A safe environment conducive to intellectual transaction must: (1) be student centered, i.e., elicit and support, respond to, and genuinely base itself upon, student intent, (2) foster norms of intellectualism and dynamic construction of meaning, and (3) be characterized by consistent non-abuse of traditionally sanctioned teacher-power status.

A logical first step toward establishing the desired environment is to actively identify and break down the dichotomy between students' agendas and the school agenda. Students are often unaware of the nature of the dichotomy. Having experienced it since their earliest encounters with formalized education, it is seldom given conscious consideration. Yet, awareness is a necessary first step toward resolution. Student awareness
can be promoted through candid discussion of obvious differences.

While building awareness is a reasonably expedient objective, breaking down the dichotomy is, at best, a monumental task. The problem is fueled by long standing top-down traditions of curriculum development and unidirectional instructional delivery systems. Students naturally come to school with a mind-set that says, "This is school. In school, 'school stuff' is important." Of course, once outside the classroom, children quickly return to their own schedules. In truth, the personal agenda retains priority throughout the school day. It is on those occasions when the programs somehow merge (or at least overlap) that we feel we are "finally reaching our class!"

Little progress will be made toward resolving the problem until teachers and school officials come to understand that student intentionality is the driving force behind learning. Students' intentions and interests are the logical point of origin for lesson planning and environment construction. If a safe yet intellectually honest environment is to maximize intentionality and socialization, it is the teacher's task to facilitate erosion of the dichotomy. This is done first by building awareness of its existence and then by establishing an arena in which students are en-
couraged and permitted to allow personal agendas to become their school agendas as well.

Non-abuse of Teacher Power Norms

J.T. Dillon (1987) has described the classroom norm as one in which teachers exercise inordinate verbal autonomy and a mandate to control the agenda, the pace, and the selection of participants for classroom discussions. When considered in view of substantial evidence to suggest that the vast majority of teachers respond negatively to student comments which they perceive as either challenging their authority or "intellectual superiority," there seems to be little rhyme or reason for teachers to advocate normative reformation. However, in contrast to long-sanctioned practice, a safe environment which also maximizes intellectual trans-action, student intent, and collaborative socialization for educative purpose, will require establishment of a norm which says to students that it is often healthy and expected for students and teachers to disagree.

We as teachers must convince first ourselves, and then our students, that we do not consider ourselves the "final authority." Students need to understand that it is okay to challenge the teacher's thoughts and notions and, indeed, to espouse thoughts and notions of their own. But, equally important is the establishment of a teacher norm which says,
"...although I'm certainly not the final word, I'll most assuredly voice my opinion as persuasively as possible because such expression is representative of reality. I expect you to do the same. I'll research to support my assertions. You'd better do the same, or you don't stand a chance. I'll teach you how to gather evidence to support your case ... that's my job as a teacher. Your job is to have an opinion, to develop it, to gather evidence to support, reject, or modify it. And who knows, you might affect my opinion, or I, yours; at the very least, we'll challenge each other intellectually. Through the transaction we will both benefit."

From a Vygotskian perspective, interactions with others are internalized and transformed (e.g., personalized). In addition to the academic curriculum, teacher and student attitudes and classroom participation structures also become part of the learner's schema. This applies not only to the content of the interaction, but to the essence of the transaction. It means that students not only internalize and transform for personal use the content, but the means of guidance as well. It follows that the degree to which students clearly understand that vigorous transaction with teachers and peers is not only accepted, but expected, determines in large part the degree to which optimum internalization will ultimately take place.
Clarity of expectations and consistency of follow-through are also determinants of environmental safety. Contrary to what appears to be popular belief, safety does not mean that the teacher must smile and nod approval for each student utterance no matter how inane. Nor does safety require the teacher to tactfully ignore every such statement. In truth, it is often the case that these contributions should be challenged so that the student will be compelled to rationally and systematically examine his/her thought processes. Safety can occur under these conditions when students are confident that such transactions are truly reciprocal in nature. However, this means that students must be absolutely convinced that long-sanctioned teacher power norms will not be abused (e.g., used) to subjugate students to second-class status.

THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESSING CYCLE

Vygotsky wrote, "a central feature of the psychological study of instruction is the potential the child has to raise himself to a higher intellectual level of development through collaboration" (1987). A basic premise is that through the process of internalization of social transactions, the learner will be able to independently do
today that which we could only do with assistance yesterday. These principles, generic in nature, are readily applicable to specific academic disciplines.

In the visual arts, the process of creating, analyzing, and evaluating in collaboration with others stimulates development of higher psychological functions in the construction of related meaning. This is most evident, perhaps, during critique, a participation structure which engages students in dynamic analysis and evaluation of each other's art work — both process and product. The effects of collaboration are no less profound during general awareness, focus, and synthesis efforts. Collaborative art involvement can also strengthen socialization skills, and, depending upon student grouping, may foster cross-cultural awareness and appreciation. Furthermore, it utilizes students' natural inclinations toward socialization and capitalizes on the motivating power of learner intent.

The collaborative processing cycle proposed here, based in part on Harste's language arts authoring cycle, is really quite simple (see figure 1). The first and perhaps most important step is creation of a safe, intellectually stimulating classroom environment as described above. Having accomplished this, the art instructor exposes his/her student artists to a variety of media, styles, and techniques. Initial exposures, accomplished by example and
demonstration, are immediately followed by highly experiencial periods of "play." Here students are encouraged to manipulate and explore the media, styles, and techniques. A premium is placed on the process of art, while product is almost entirely de-emphasized. One way to establish this norm is to assure students that initial works are "practice" pieces which will be discarded upon completion (unless the artist should for some reason elect to do otherwise).

Following the period of play (anywhere from minutes to days, weeks, or longer), the teacher encourages students to draw upon their own life experiences to begin plans for the creation of a piece which will hold some personal significance. It is important for students to understand that their intentions and interests are absolutely indispensable in this process.

During the Planning and Creating phase, various forms of idea generation and organizational strategies may be employed as students draw upon their life experiences to begin the process of collaborative creation. Students should be encouraged to explore their personal intentions or objectives, to focus upon a theme or issue, to identify their audience, and to select media, styles, and techniques based on each of these considerations. Opportunities for uninterrupted personal engagement need to be provided. The amount of time required will, of course, vary considerably.
The next step in the cyclical process is Small Group or Partner Exchange of preliminary ideas. This is an opportunity for student artists to share initial thoughts with a select group of their peers. Observations and reactions to tentative plans are bandied about. Ample time should be provided immediately after the exchange for students to record their reactions to the feedback. Teachers can significantly affect the degree of heterogeneous and cross-cultural socialization by carefully attending to the formation of groups.

After Small Group/Partner Exchange, students are encouraged to reflect on the feedback. This process does not always occur spontaneously. Several days is not an unreasonable amount of time to allow for this portion of the cycle. Revisions may then be made in view of active reflection on peer feedback; however, any such modification is strictly voluntary. (It must be understood that art is a form of communication. Decisions are justifiably influenced by this principle. Care must be taken to emphasize that although we communicate with others, we do not necessarily create for others. While audience is certainly important, self is vital!)

At this point, the cycle either progresses to another Small Group/Partner Exchange or continues on to a Whole-Class Display and Critique. If small group exchange is selected, the teacher has several options. She may reunite the
original groups (a decision which instills a measure of continuity) or she may arrange for new groups to meet (a decision which encourages diversity). Another option is to invite students to engage collaborators of their own choosing, a measure which most closely approximates the actions of producing artists and one which enhances autonomy. There are clearly advantages to each.

If a decision is made to proceed to the Whole-Class Display and Critique, each artist selects a personal work for the entire class to observe. Ample opportunity is provided for the whole group to examine individual pieces at close range prior to the critique.

After observing the amassed works, every piece should be addressed. (This is a process which may continue several days. Better to take it in small chunks than to wear the experience to exhaustion.) Each critique should include an opportunity for the artist to evaluate himself orally. A list of topics to which he might attend (e.g., identify original intentions, audience, and media selection; discuss special challenges faced; describe ways in which collaboration influenced your decision making, etc.) can help ease initial discomfort associated with "not knowing what to say." Other students should be encouraged to analyze the work as well; to verbalize their reactions, concerns, and questions. The emphasis of the critique, as always, is the search for meaning through the
construction of knowledge. This is a shared prize of artist and audience alike.

Teachers do well to model the kinds of questions which lead to greater understanding. They may also render insightful evaluative judgements. Remember, the teacher's opinions and observations are entirely open for challenge or rebuttal. This opportunity for reciprocity is an underlying principle of fair play, and, subsequently, of environmental safety.

The cycle is completed with an Invitation to Further Artistic Engagement. Students may be encouraged either to continue the process or to renew it. New media, styles, techniques, and opportunities for play are provided, and the process begins anew.

It is highly recommended that students keep a journal, a written record of their thoughts and actions, for each major phase of the cycle. This gives them concrete reference to at least a portion of the on-going activity and provides teachers with a chronological record of their students' involvement in the collaborative process of art education.

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The model of art education proposed here is based on the conviction that the construction of meaning transcends
disciplinary boundaries. Social mediation and learner intent are as critical to the vital processes in art and mathematics as they are to reading and writing. Traditional norms of teacher power and misconceptions of the concept of environmental safety have mitigated against the establishment of intellectually stimulating transactional settings. This model rejects such norms and seeks to clarify damaging misconceptions in an effort to redefine optimum conditions for intellectual collaboration. Eclectic in nature, the Collaborative Model of Art Education is a synthesis of the principles of transactional learning theory and the processes of making and critiquing visual art.
COLLABORATIVE PROCESSING MODEL

1. Establish a safe yet intellectually stimulating environment

2. Expose to a variety of media, styles, techniques

3. Play (manipulate media, styles, techniques)

THE CYCLE

Draw on life experiences to:

Plan & Create
(Uninterrupted Personal Engagements)

Invitations to Further Engagements

Whole-Class Display & Critique

Small Group or Partner Exchange (Presenting & Sharing Meaning with Others)

Reflection & Revision (Plan & Create - more uninterrupted personal engagement)

Small Group or Partner Exchange (Explore meaning with Intentional Others)
COLLABORATIVE PROCESSING CYCLE

1. Planning & Creating
   a. Brainstorming, webbing, listing, sketching of ideas, interests, and concerns.
   b. Identify personal intentions, objectives, purposes for a particular project. (These may include persuasion, clarification to self or others, reinforcement, etc.)*
   c. Identify topic (subject), theme, or issue for the project.
   d. Identify audience for the project.**
   e. Select appropriate media and style(s) for the project (e.g., abstract/representational, figurative/nonfigurative, Appolinian/Dionysian, etc.). Selection of media and style should be based upon each of the previous considerations.

2. Small Group or Partner Exchange
   a. Share #1, a-e, with intentional others.
   b. Observations & reactions of others and the student artist’s initial reactions & responses to those observations.***

3. Reflection and Revision
   a. Reflect on #1, a-e in light of feedback from small group or partner exchange.
   b. Revise (if desired) in light of reflection.

4. Small Group or Partner Exchange
   a. Share revised #1, a-e with intentional others.
   b. Observations & reactions of others and the student artist’s initial feelings & responses to those observations.***
5. Whole-Class Display and Critique
   a. Artist critiques self orally (explains original #1, a-e, revisions to #1, a-e, and special challenges faced).
   b. Students critique orally if they so choose. (Instructor may elicit oral critiques from students.)
   c. Teacher critique orally (based on #1, a-e).

6. Invitations to Further Engagements
   (Encourage student artists to continue/renew the process.)

   An ongoing journal/folder should include:
   a. All original decisions and revisions regarding interests and concerns, intentions and purposes, topics and issues, audiences, and media and styles.
   b. The reactions of others to the student artist's work (particularly in relation to #1, a-e).
   c. The student artist's reactions to the work of others (particularly in relation to #1, a-e).
   d. A summary of the student artist's progress (process) for each major piece.

* Emphasize the concept of art as a form of communication.

** Be careful of the audience concept. We communicate to others but don't necessarily create for others. We create for ourselves.

*** Provide time for immediate reflection and recording of thoughts.
References


References


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