

# The International Hexagon Interdependence Project: Building Cooperation

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**Grade Level:** Middle (6-8)

**Duration:** 4 weeks, 20 sessions, 45 minutes a piece

## Overview

Students identify, explore, and collaboratively create images that relate to the themes of the Hexagon Project in relationship to their own concerns and sense of social justice.

### National Visual Arts Standards:

**VA:Cr1.2.8a** Collaboratively shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art and design.

**VA:Cr2.1.8a** Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making or designing.

**VA:Cr2.3.8a** Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations.

**VA:Cr3.1.8a** Apply relevant criteria to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for a work of art or design in progress.

**VA:Pr5.1.8a** Collaboratively prepare and present selected theme-based artwork for display, *and formulate exhibition narratives for the viewer.*

**VA:Re.7.2.8a** Compare and contrast contexts and media in which viewers encounter images that influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

**VA:Cn10.1.8a** Make art collaboratively to reflect on and reinforce positive aspects of group identity.

### Nevada State Visual Arts Standards:

**VA:1.8.3** Use and explain why various media, techniques, and processes are used to produce works of art that communicate ideas and experiences.

**VA2.8.4** Explain how one's own artwork employs various visual characteristics to communicate.

**VA2.8.3** Discuss why visual characteristics, purposes and/or functions may be effective in works of art.

**VA3.8.2** Plan and produce works of art that use a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas from varied times and places to communicate meaning.

**VA.4.8.2** Describe the purpose and discuss the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places.

**VA5.8.1** Interpret artwork based on various characteristics such as themes, styles, purposes, and subject matter.

**VA6.8.3** Create works of art reflecting principles common to the arts and multiple disciplines.

## Objectives

*Learning Objectives measure behavioral objectives (what the student can do at the lesson completion) and knowledge objectives (what the student knows at lesson completion).*

### Objectives for Planning

Behavioral or knowledge objectives that measure idea generation, refinement of plans, choice making, etc. in relation to planning a product.

Students will organize themselves into collaborative teams, identify an issue or global challenge, research the scope of that problem, brainstorm images they could make, and then create an artwork for the Hexagon Project.

### Objectives for the Product(s)

Behavioral or knowledge objectives that measure the application of skills, media, and art concepts.

Students will plan and create an artwork well, collaboratively.

Students will use the media best suited to their idea appropriately, designing images that are visually clear and compelling.

Students will see their artwork as part of an exhibition, and through critiques will experience both the international and interdisciplinary aspects of this challenge.

Students will understand and communicate ideas about their 'group identity', and [next year] will articulate exhibition narratives in the context of 'check in' critiques.

### Objectives for Student Reflection

Knowledge objectives that measure student understanding: personal message/meaning, understanding of the relationship with the artist or theme, the process and media used, the technical skills that were gained.

Students will cooperatively reflect on issues that affect their lives and be willing to discuss ideas, forms, and ideas and pursue an artistic investigation of that problem.

Students will be able to articulate the meaning-making and design elements that are innovative in their work.

Students will understand and plan for revisions of their work in progress.

Students will guide one another in formative 'check-in' critiques, discussing why visual characteristics, purposes, and functions may be effective in works of art.

Students will be able to formulate exhibition narratives for their viewers as part of this process, including creating captions and short introductions.

## **Assessments**

Authentic assessment usually includes a task for students to perform and a rubric by which their performance on the task will be evaluated. Assessments can be formative (in progress) and summative (final product). Assessment may also take the form of Pre-Assessments which assess prior knowledge in order to effectively plan for the entire group. Assessments should be directly aligned with the established learning objectives for the lesson.

### **Assessing student planning**

Formative assessments that measure idea generation, refinement of plans, and choice making in relation to making a product. These can take the form of checklists, sketchbooks, or planning sheets.

Using thumbnail sketches to integrate and refine their responses to the problem they select.

Investigation and comparison of works of excellence.

“Tickets out” that describe their intent and any solutions they’ve brainstormed to the problem or issue they’ve selected to work on.

Describing the intent and process of working collaboratively through answering questions such as:

What misconceptions need to be addressed?

Who is understanding and who is not understanding where we are going with the lesson?

What adjustments should be made to instruction?

What special tools or materials do you need to be successful?

### **Assessing student product(s)**

Summative assessments that measure the application of skills, media, and art concepts in a product generated as a result of the lesson.

rubric, checklist, tracking progress sheet, self- assessment, peer critique

Peer critiques and “Third Space” critiques where an audience (upper classmen, invited faculty) can participate in formative assessments during the process (insuring that meaning-making and symbols are ‘read’ by an audience as they were intended—with the artist present to shape the discussion).

### **Assessing student reflections**

Summative assessments that measure student understanding of personal message/meaning, understanding of the relationship with the artist or theme, the process and media used, the technical skills that were gained. These can take the form of checklists, brief constructed responses, peer assessments, etc.

Students reflect through questioning:

What did I learn from this collaboration?

What is our “exhibition narrative” and does our work successfully communicate that narrative to viewers visually?

What do we still need to work on?

How did our approach match our intended audience’s experience of the work?

What would we do differently if we were to do this again?

## **Materials & Procedure**

### **Materials**

Hexagons

Hexagon thumbnails

Computer and internet access

Printers

Various media the students have experience with

Mounting supplies - foam board, spray adhesive and X-acto knives

### **Procedure**

Lesson is written for 20 - 45 minute lessons

Scaffolding: prior knowledge and experience with the media, color theory, design procedures and processes.

Lesson 1:

Introduction - Class discussion about what the International Hexagon Interdependence Project is, including a 'Second Space' critique of the 2015 Hexagons

Conclusion - Before they leave class, ask students to pay attention in the next few days to their environment for possible Hexagon 'issues' or 'problems' that could become topics from their everyday life.

Lesson 2:

Introduction – Look at the formal Hexagon website, Flickr page, and at any Hexagons we have from 2014

Group Activity – Ask students to choose a specific Hexagon to analyze for the formal elements in the work together (so they don't choose the same ones).

Small Group Activity – Pair off and diagram the compositions in the Hexagons, and talk about why (or why not) they are successful.

Lesson 3:

Introduction – Ask students to make a classroom list of things that are going on in their world—here, in their own community, abroad in northern Nevada, and around the globe—that they are concerned about. This is a reciprocal teaching activity designed as a brainstorm. Emphasize that this list may change over time as we think more about our concerns. After the introduction, ask students to divide themselves into teams of 2-4 students to decide on specific issues their group is interested in addressing.

Lesson 4:

Introduction – Collaboration is a very specific '21<sup>st</sup> century' skill that is valued in the production of ideas, in design, in workplaces where production requires thinking or metacognition. Ask students to create 'norms' for their collaboration. (How they'll treat one another, how they expect to be treated, etc.)

Individual (or group) Activity - Allow students time to investigate a variety of responses to the issue they are most concerned about via the Internet.

Lesson 5:

Introduction—Show students the '5 Gyres' website: <http://www.5gyres.org/> and ask if they have any ideas about how to solve this particular problem. Then show them the Boyan Slat design for cleaning up garbage patches in the ocean, including his trial and error and research for his design: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpDxE8BhPSM>  
Investigation continues. Focus should be on contemporary artists responses to their selected issue, and also on gathering more information about the response of others concerned about that issue. Students should begin gathering information about ways to make meaning regarding inventing their own solutions to the issue they've chosen to address.

Lesson 6: Students have Hexagon "thumbnails", and the investigation and conversations regarding their research and designs (and solutions!) continues.

Lesson 7:

Introduction – Watch the science film "Crosscutting Patterns #1" and discuss how patterns is an interdisciplinary and interrelated concept that is also related to the larger idea of the Hexagon as a metaphor for both interrelatedness and for the patterns in nature that are found in the Fibonacci Principle as well as in the Golden Section. (Remind them of the film 'Donald Duck in Mathmagicaland' Investigations and design development continues.

Lesson 8:

Hexagon thumbnails are developed, conversations in class regarding media and needs for any special materials continue.

Lessons-9-15: (7 class periods)

Hexagons are designed, produced, and finalized in teams. Formative assessment in terms of small-group 'check in' critiques are held in class weekly, and visiting critics come

in to see the progress and make suggestions informally, discussing student intent and the reception of that meaning-making to someone who has not seen the work emerging.

Lesson 16: Each of the student groups finalizes their Hexagons, mounting them to foam core for presentation, and hangs them in the hall.

Lesson 17: An exhibition narrative and introduction are documented, and photographs are taken of the Hexagons in preparation for submitting them to the Hexagon Project for exhibition.

Lesson 18: Students discuss and refine their own work and the work of others, including the visual elements, the exhibition narrative, any captioning or writing they feel needs to accompany their work. A group photograph is taken with the work, and a Hexagon is created to accompany our narrative.

Lesson 19: Students finalize the narratives and any remaining editing for mailing the work.

Lesson 20: Students reflect on the process and their learning, and a formal summative rubric is filled out and turned in.

## Additional Details

### Differentiated Instruction

Describes how you can differentiate this lesson for gifted, special needs, and ESOL students.

Students with special needs will be included in the art classroom as one of our classroom community values and the *norms* written down as part of establishing our collaborative process. Gifted students will have opportunities to lead. Students who prefer to work individually can also be accommodated.

Differentiation refers to student access to learning through varied content (determined by prior knowledge), process (how material will be learned) and/or product (demonstration of mastery) depending upon the needs of the individual student.

A variety of learning styles are addressed through large and small group activities, individual activity, written and verbal communication, inquiry through different media and hands-on activities.

Students will work in a number of group activities that will support students with special needs by utilizing personal strengths. Written assignments can be adapted for a variety of learning needs including online text to voice, font size and scripting.

ESOL students can be supported through the use of gestures, images and expressive language during instruction. They should be encouraged to communicate in the safety of the small group.

### Resources

Additional resources that might aid the teacher.

Key Elements:

Class website (see 'Creative Art >8<sup>th</sup> grade' and 'Creative Art Digital Links'): <http://staff.lyon.k12.nv.us/lsmith-fillmore/>

Hexagon Examples

The Hexagon Project website: <http://www.hexagonproject.org/>

Hexagon Project Flickr Page: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133750417@N03/d4Jb44>

Interdependent 2015 Hexagon Project Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMM8jqaSGFc>

**Attachments** (to be developed for the creation of narratives, critiques, and for 'Tickets out' for student use).

### Sample Artwork

[Artwork files that illustrate the results of this plan.](#)



## Teacher Reflections:

We submitted Hexagons in 2014 & 2015 from Smith Valley School. Both middle school and high school Creative Art students submitted work in 2014, but in 2015 (examples included above), only the 7<sup>th</sup> grade class made Hexagons (see above). They were particularly visually literate as that class had produced a book during the first semester using colored pencils. They are also a particularly talented cadre of students in our school.

First, social justice and thinking about meaning-making is not new to them in my classroom—and I am a particularly lucky art educator who teaches K-12 Fine Art & New Media in a rural Nevada school where I see all elementary students once weekly and where 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school students come into the art classroom to work during 6-week intervals that are rotated with the Physical Education teacher on campus.

There are a few brief anecdotes that stand out in my mind having now contributed to the Hexagon Project over the last two years that were transformative:

1. The first year the ‘big kids’ (High School students) were not particularly interested in contributing until they saw the ‘little kids’ work and realized that they were actually missing out on something relatively wonderful (and interesting and complex). They asked to make Hexagons!
2. There was also a young woman who came to our school from Mexico late in the semester who had almost completed high school there but had very little experience with English. An accomplished artist, she contributed a powerfully made Hexagon that I later returned to her at the restaurant where she now works. She was elated that I remembered her, elated that her work had been exhibited, and even happier that I took time to return it.
3. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders the first year are my ‘first kindergartners’ and my favorite class. A new student had joined them in that year who is autistic, and whose academic skills made his participation in the art classroom tenuous. He joined a group of students tackling issues that are threatening our environment, and this young man was given carbon air pollution as the concern he would address. I watched him meet with his peers, and then draw out his designs. They did the same, and then researched their respective issues to include more factual information in their hexagons. As he worked a bit more slowly and deliberately, I didn’t see him utilizing the internet in the same manner as his peers, and then one day he asked to use the computers and did an amazing job of distilling down information he accessed and then included in his hexagon. It was a pretty amazing day: a very shy, autistic student found his voice among his peers—two of whom are gifted, one of whom is a hopelessly romantic and idealistic creative, and one of whom is very rational and concrete. It was a balance that allowed this student with special needs to really blossom.
4. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders in the second year surprised and delighted me—I didn’t even know how good their Hexagons were until I readied them for the exhibition on the last day of June this last summer. I fractured my pelvis and then had emergency surgery last winter/spring, and so I had turned over much of their instruction to substitutes until I returned and we really started the Hexagons. I gave them ideas, worked with them to develop relationships to contemporary artists based on their interests, and pushed them to think about solutions, but I admittedly spent more time with my AP2D Design students in the same class period. They’re talented, and independent, and ran with every suggestion I had related to contemporary artists, depictions of the drought in our community and the west generally, and worked on some of the Hexagons at home, returning them without even showing me the final designs. Three young men who don’t particularly like art also worked really hard with the leadership of a young woman who kept them working and encouraged them to finish sections of their installation also surprised me: it was their experience making a book that had taught them the perseverance that it took to complete the color fields in their work. I was just blown away when I saw the work as it was mounted in June—what an amazing thing to know that they had compassion for me on my crutches, and to see that they’d finished their work and turned it in without even showing me.
5. This year we have a new website, where parents and students can access lessons and see progress in the art classroom, and the Hexagon awards announcement was one of the first things we posted. When the photographs from Beth were displayed online, a parent got ahold of her and asked that one of them be turned ‘right side up’ in the display. What a lovely gesture on Beth’s part to do that for us, and to photograph the Hexagons so we could see them in the context of the exhibition—(we’d photographed them last year, but we didn’t this spring as I was just barely hanging on in class as I was still navigating on crutches).
6. The opportunity to share submissions on Flickr and the opportunity to think carefully about contributing Hexagons and a deeper experience of the international and interdisciplinary connections to this work are what I’m excited about for our 2016 contributions!