

MAKING SHAPE OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

Grade: Kindergarten

Teacher(s):

Allissa Dern, Kelly Shannon, Tricia Rownd, Wendee DeSent

Artist(s):

Winifred Haun and Amy Crandall/Dance

Laurie Peters and Molly Cranch/Visual Art

Academic Content and Learning Skills:

Math and Social Studies

Arts Content:

Dance and Visual Arts

Overview

Making Shape of Our Environment is a month-long integrated kindergarten unit. This unit integrated dance and visual art with Math and Social Studies. The unit was developed by the kindergarten teachers and the two artists over many weeks. The professional artists come into the classroom for 5-10 sessions per class and team teach with the classroom teachers in their area of expertise (i.e. 5 hours of dance/class and 5 hours of visual



arts/class) during the month long period of implementation. The students combine skills learned in the classroom with dance and visual art to create maps of their environment (bedroom, classroom, and playground). They also learn to read and locate objects on a map. The unit is a powerful way for students to deeply internalize basic understandings of shape and mapping.

Research and Inquiry

How do we identify and represent the shapes in our environment, and the shape of our environment?

A Variety of Hands-on Approaches to Generating and Representing New Knowledge

- Students do a "shape search" in their school.
- Students imagine themselves on the ceiling of their classroom, and construct a map of their classroom.
- Students learn about levels in dance and about making shapes with their bodies.
- Students learn to draw organic and geometric shapes.
- Students draw sections of their classroom, paying attention to levels and shapes (see drawing above).

- Students choreograph dances, make shapes with their bodies, and dance a pattern on the floor of the room.
- Students make maps of their dances, using their maps as notation to make their dances repeatable.

Connecting Hands-on Activities to Applied Analytical Thinking

Students work in teams, and, applying what they have learned in the classroom, create extraordinarily accurate maps of their playground.

Field Research from Sources Outside the School

Students draw detailed, sophisticated pictures of buildings from the neighborhood of the school, paying attention to levels and shapes.

Students also take a field trip to the top of the John Hancock Building (the tallest building on Chicago's lakefront) to literally be able to look down on the city and see what shapes their city makes when seen from above.

Assessing, Presenting, Teaching Others, and Engaging Parents and Community

Students work with their parents and families in identifying organic and geometric shapes in their bedrooms, and in drawing maps of their bedrooms.

Classroom Goals

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of direction, size, shape, levels, and geographic representation.
- Describe the physical environment of neighborhood and local community. Identify the shape of objects common to the students' environment

State Goals

Demonstrate a knowledge of world geography

- Use geometric method to analyze, categorize, and draw conclusions about points, lines, planes, and space.
- Understand the sensory elements, organizational principles and ideas expressed in and among the arts.
- Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

Resources

Books that are useful in helping Kindergarten students understand the concept of "how things look when seen from above" such as:

TAR BEACH
 THE BEE BUZZED BY
 Various pop-up books