

## 2014-1015 Featured Grantee Summary

**Grantee Name:**

**Tracy Berges**

**Title of Project:**

**Sketchbooks, Standards and the Common Core**

**City, State:**

Suffern, NY

**Grant Period:**

July 2014 – June 2015

**NAEF Grant Amount:**

\$1,000 (Teacher Incentive)

**Project Contact:**

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*A Junior in High School wonders "Why" and "How" as she explores the work of an artist through research, writing and replicating.*

**Project Description:**

Five art teachers, representing elementary through high school, met to explore the use and purpose of a sketchbook within the art curriculum across grade levels five through twelve. Teachers explored their own creative process, while simultaneously discussing and implementing sketchbook activities in their classrooms that promoted creativity and exploration, in addition to supporting the Common Core ELA shifts.

**Project Goals and Objectives:**

To create a scaffold of educational activities that promote positive student routines (i.e. investigation, experimentation, creativity, synthesizing and production), while gradually advancing rigor appropriate to the grade level. The activities will align with the new National Core Arts Standards and the Common Core ELA shifts. Ultimately, the students will compile a year-long visual record of their creative problem solving abilities through a variety of methods, skills and materials.

**Description of Activities Supported by this Grant. For Research Grantees, include a summary of research methodology.**

The participating art teachers consisted of three high school teachers, one middle school teacher and one elementary school teacher who met six times, outside of their regular school day, to collaborate regarding the use of sketchbooks within the Ramapo Central School District. All of the teachers involved had worked at the high school during their teaching career, thus each teacher had an understanding of the end goals of our K-12 program. We met after school for one to two hours each time, as well as completing research on our own, and implementing ideas within our individual curriculums. During our meetings we modeled sketchbook exercises for each other, discussed articles, collaborated around planning age appropriate sketchbook activities, and set goals for specific skills students would build from grades five to twelve.

**Participating art educators:**

- Gary Blake
- Kate Blitz
- Nicole McKenzie
- Danielle Ross

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**Results:** The overarching theme of our discussions always came back to how to motivate the students to explore, to play, to investigate and overall be creative, while still moving through our curriculum and addressing some of the shifts needed to connect with the ELA Common Core guidelines. On all levels the teachers involved trialed new activities that created the connections we were investigating. Below are samples of successful sketchbook activities developed and trialed during our grant period:

- High school teacher Kate Blitz asked students in her 9th grade Introduction to Art class to tell the story of a piece of artwork. Students looked at a work by Mary Cassatt and had a group discussion, describing what they felt was the story of the image based on contextual clues within the painting. Mrs. Blitz reported that students were able to accurately predict the time period, the role of women, etc. based on objects portrayed in the image as well as engaging in a very lively discussion.
- Middle school teacher Gary Blake read aloud with his students a factual article about Aboriginal Art. He had students take turns reading, while all students were expected to take notes in their sketchbooks as the article was read aloud. Students created a composition that reflected what they had learned through their reading and research.
- At the elementary level (pictured above), Nicole McKenzie had her 5<sup>th</sup> grade students design an original character in their sketchbooks, build a 3D model and then write a story in their sketchbooks that featured their character.
- On all levels, students engaged in the writing process within their sketchbooks. At times it was based on artwork created by professional artists while other times they were writing about student artwork or their own artwork. In our college level Drawing & Painting class, taught through Seton Hall University's Project Acceleration, students were engaged in museum writing based on the document "If You Can't See It Don't Say It; A new approach to interpretive writing" by Kris Wetterlund, Museum Ed, Minneapolis.

**Impact of Receiving this Grant:** The support of the grant had two distinct influences. The first was being able to provide all of our fifth grade students in one elementary school with a free, hardbound sketchbook to jumpstart their creativity. The second would be to provide curriculum development money for the teachers involved, and thus time, which was ultimately supplemented through our district as well.

**Grantee Biography:** Tracy Berges has been teaching for fourteen years in the Art Department at Suffern High School in Suffern, New York. Prior to teaching, Tracy was an Art Therapist and Child Life Specialist for the Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Department at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey. Tracy has served as the department chairperson; she is the adviser for the SHS chapter of the National Art Honor Society, and she teaches a full schedule of classes including Advanced Placement Studio Art, College Drawing & Painting through the Project Acceleration program at Seton Hall University and College Art as Therapy through St. Thomas Aquinas College.

**About the National Art Education Foundation:** NAEF supports visual art educators and promotes the teaching of art through professional development, research, and program sponsorship. As an independent, philanthropic organization, NAEF assists with efforts to represent the teachers of art in America, improve the conditions of teaching art; promote the teaching of art; encourage research and experimentation in art education; sponsor institutes, conferences, and programs on art education; and to publish articles, reports, and surveys about art. The Foundation has supported 286 projects since its inception in 1985. NAEF funding supports a wide variety of professional activities, including research in art education, scholarships for professional development, promotion of art education as an integral part of the curriculum; establishment and/or improvement of art instruction in public and private K-16 schools; promotion of the teaching of art through activities related to the instructional process, curriculum, student learning, student assessment, classroom behavior, management, or discipline; purchase of art equipment and/or instructional resources. Donations in support of NAEF, a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization, are tax deductible and greatly appreciated.