



# Safe at School Art Curricula Elementary School

## Day 1: Shape and Feeling

### Goal:

The students will explore the use of abstract shapes and the feelings they evoke.

### Process:

This lesson plan is based on Molly Bang's "Picture This." A good summary of the principles of the book is available at <http://www.northern.edu/hastingw/mbang.htm>. Her own website is <http://www.mollybang.com/>.

1. Cut out basic shapes (triangles, rectangles, circles and other curvilinear shapes) from several colors of construction paper (red, black, white and light purple). Cut out several different sizes of each shape. Place a large white sheet of paper on an easel for a background.
2. Have the children brainstorm a fairy tale that portrays a bully picking on a weaker victim, or you pick one (Little Red Riding Hood or The Three Pigs are both good examples).
3. Using the colored paper, pick a shape that will be the "bad guy" in the story. Do they want it to be a soft, curvy shape or a rectilinear, angular one? Put both options up on the white paper on the easel and ask them which one feels "badder." Long, thinner (acute) triangles feel more threatening than stable, fat (equilateral) triangles or rectangles and squares. Triangles that are tilted off the horizon line feel scarier than those that are based on the horizon.
4. Now ask them to find a "good guy" shape (Use the same color). Should it be the same shape as the bad guy? Should it be different? (yes!) Should it be curvy or angular? Ask them to imagine running to the "good guy" shape for comfort and safety. What would that shape feel like? We feel scared with pointed or jagged shapes and more secure with rounded or curvy ones. Should the safe shape be the same color as the scary shape? Try making the safe shape different colors. Which one is safest? The pastel color will feel best!
5. Now put the two shapes on the board on opposite sides of the paper. How do the two relate to one another? Consider their size. Should the bad guy be bigger or smaller than the good guy? Is the bad guy scarier when it is a lot bigger? The larger a shape is in the picture, the more frightening it feels. The smaller a shape, the more vulnerable it seems.
6. Now ask the students to think about how the two are related on the paper. Does the bad shape feel more threatening if it is closer or farther away from the good shape? Is a threatening person scarier when they are closer to the victim or farther away? Does the bad shape need to be up high on the picture plane? Should the smaller one be lower down? Should they be near to one another and both closer or farther away? What happens when the shapes are in the center of the picture plane? How do the students feel when the shape or shapes are moved to the edge of the page? The center of the page is the center of attention. The closer an object is to the edge of the paper, the greater the tension we feel. Play around with the shapes changing their position on the paper until the children are satisfied with their placement. (If the shapes are close together the larger shape feels more

- threatening. If they are closer to us, we relate to them more than if they are in the background and removed from our world.
7. Now discuss the setting for the shapes. Tall, thin vertical rectangles are exciting and strong. Try putting some tall, thin, black rectangles across the white page - how do they read to the children? Can they be trees in a forest? What happens when you change those rectangles and make them thinner or fatter? What if they extend off the page? What happens if you tilt the rectangles? Do they make the space safer or scarier? Diagonal shapes imply motion or tension. The diagonal rectangles seem as if they are poised in mid-motion. Are they falling?
  8. How can you make a “safe” place for the “good guy” shape to hide from the bad one? What type of shape would this be? Would it be a tall thin rectangle or a square shape? A square is a stable shape and should be seen as an island of calm within the picture plane. What color should it be? What happens when you make it the same color as the “good guy” shape? Does it look like it belongs there? Do the students associate the shapes with real objects? Does the square seem to read like a house?
  9. Have the students return to their seats where they will find the cut out shapes and white background paper. Ask the students to use these shapes to illustrate a scary scene in one of the fairy tales you have discussed.
  10. Have the students look at each others work and lead a discussion of what spaces are scariest and why.

## Day 2: Words Hurt

### Goal:

The students will explore the use of colors and the feelings they evoke.

### Process:

Do this lesson the period after “Shape and Feeling: Day 1”

1. Place the students work from the previous period at their places. Have other colors of construction paper and scissors at their places. (Or for the younger children, place pre cut shapes in different colors at their places.)
2. Gather the students in a circle in front of an easel with your shape exercise from the previous class. Look at the “bad guy” shape. Do they like its color? Have precut shapes out of other colors. What is a scary color? Why are these colors scary? Often children have associative feelings about colors: fire is warm and exciting, therefore red is also. What color do they want the bad guy to be? Try different solutions until they are satisfied.
3. Now look at the good guy. What color should it be? Is it better as a pure color or as a pastel? What colors do they think of as kind or nurturing? Why? Again is it because they associate it with something good?
4. Have different background colors available. What happens when you change the color of the background? Does it feel scarier when it is dark and cool or warm and bright?
5. Send the students back to their seats. Have them experiment with changing the colors of their shapes until they are satisfied with the outcome. Now have them try different backgrounds. When they like the background and the colors they have chosen, have them glue them to the paper.

## Day 3: Words Hurt

### Goal:

Students will learn that words can be hurtful.

### Process:

1. Ask the students to think about how bird parents take care of an egg. Remind them that an egg is fragile and breaks very easily. Discuss how birds keep their eggs and young safe until they are ready to fly and fend for themselves. They must build a nest for the egg that will protect it from predators: it must be camouflaged and built to withstand strong winds and storms.
2. The students will make their own “eggs.” Blow up small balloons for the younger children. Allow the older ones to blow theirs up if there is time. The students will use Paper Mache to cover the balloons with newspaper and then paint them.
3. Have the students pick a balloon. Cover the balloons with strips of newspaper dipped into flour and water (or whatever similar method you want to use.) Pre-cut the strips so they are not too long. Make sure that the students cover the balloons completely and with more than one strip of paper. The balloons should be covered with several layers so they are solid when dry. The more layers, the stronger the shell!
4. Have the students hang their eggs from a clothesline clipped to the knotted end of the balloon. Have the children write their names on a piece of paper to clip with the egg. (Reinforce any areas that are too weak in time for it to dry before the next period.)

## Day 4: Words Hurt Part II

### Goal:

Students will learn that words can be hurtful.

### Process:

1. Take the eggs down from the clothesline. Pop the balloons and pull them out through the hole where the knot was. Put them at the children's places.
2. Have tempura paints and brushes available as well as containers to mix paint in.
3. Ask the students to consider what color their egg should have as its "base coat." Explain that the base coat is the bottom color over which they will add other colors of patterns and designs.
4. Go over basic color mixing. Tell them they can pick ANY color as the base coat. This is their egg and it can look any way they want. It does not have to be realistic!
5. Have the children mix their base coat color and paint their egg all over. This is messy!

## Day 5: Words Hurt Part III

### Goal:

Students will learn that words can be hurtful.

### Process:

1. Mix a large container of wheat or wallpaper paste. (Mix the paste until it has no lumps.)
2. Put out tempera paint, trays, pattern rollers, sponges and plastic wrap.
3. Mix the paste with several colors of paint with an even amount of paint and paste. (You can adjust the amounts to get the desired amount of translucency in the paint.) Mix the paint on a tray so the rollers and sponges can be covered with paint evenly.
4. Demonstrate to the students how the paint can be applied with the pattern rollers, sponges and plastic wrap. (Plastic wrap can be dipped in the paint, then crumpled and applied to the egg surface for a nice crinkled effect-best for older children.) Make sure you emphasize that they can layer several colors one on top of the other while the paints are still wet.
5. Have the students apply layers of pattern to their eggs. Encourage them to experiment and add lots of layers and wild colors! Be sure to remind them not to push too hard on their eggs as they will crush!

## Day 6: Words Hurt Part IV

### Goal:

Students will learn that words can be hurtful.

### Process:

1. Place the eggs all together on a table. When the students enter the room, ask them to find their own egg.
2. After the students have brought their eggs to their places, ask them how they were able to find their eggs? How did they recognize theirs?
3. Now ask the children if they know what the word stereotype means? A stereotype is a very simple way of thinking about someone or something. For example: all dogs that are yellow will bite, or all black cats will scratch.
4. Now have the children think of some stereotypes about their eggs. Help them by beginning with something like “all eggs that have blue on them are silly!” Or “all eggs with pink are stupid!” Write them on the board so there is one statement for every color used on the eggs. Keep them general and generic.
5. Read the statements out loud one at a time and ask the students to pick up their egg when you have a read a statement about a color that is on their egg. The students should all be holding their eggs at the end of this.
6. Ask them if those things are true about their eggs. (Of course not!) Ask the students how they felt when you were saying the mean things about their eggs. Did they feel sad, mad at you, or ashamed of their egg? Let them talk about their feelings.
7. When you were saying all the mean things about the eggs, did they notice that what you were saying had nothing to do with their eggs? That is what stereotypes are like: they have nothing to do with how someone really is. Can they think of some real stereotypes? Help them by starting and be sure to keep it very general such as: all old people have trouble hearing. As they think of different stereotype statements write them on the board. Then ask the students if someone knows someone who is NOT like the stereotype? (My grandmother hears very well, and she is old!) Go through all the statements and have the students think of exceptions to all of them.
8. Have the students look at their eggs. Ask them if they are all alike or different? Point out to them that they all had the same colors, brushes and rollers to work with. If they all had the same materials available, why don't their eggs all look the same? Someone will eventually say it's because THEY are all different and unique. Point out that the eggs are so beautiful and unique—wouldn't it be boring if they all looked the same? Introduce the concept of diversity: that we are all different and unique. Wouldn't life be dull if all children were the same? If we all looked alike? If we all talked alike? If they all made the exact same egg? Etc...

**Day 7: Words Hurt Part V****Goal:**

Students will learn that words can be hurtful.

**Process:**

1. Show the students pictures of a variety of birds' nests. Tell the children they are going to make nests for their eggs to keep them safe. Ask them to think about something strong that will keep the nest from falling apart in high winds and storms and a warm, soft, cushioning lining.
2. Collect before class a number of different sized sticks—from about 6-15" and of varying thicknesses. (You can also take a short walk with students to gather these.) Have various soft materials available: small pieces of cloth, string, yarn, feathers, dried grasses, strips of newspaper, leaves and any other soft materials you have on hand. Also have pipe cleaners or other fasteners available for tying sticks together.
3. Have pieces of cardboard as bases to build on. Ask the children to write their names on their base before beginning. Have the students trace around the bottom of their eggs with a marker on the cardboard. Have the students paint the cardboard with glue and then lay the first layer of sticks on top. They will then weave sticks together to create their nests making sure they are large enough for their eggs. (For younger children, it is easiest for them to arrange the sticks in a square.) Students can use string or pipe cleaners to tie the ends of the sticks together if necessary.
4. Have the children feather their nests with all kinds of soft materials to cushion their eggs and keep them warm.
5. Finish by placing the eggs in the nests and displaying them.

## Day 8: Conversations and Arguments with Lines

### Goal:

The students will learn to use visual instead of verbal language to have a conversation.

### Process:

1. Pair the students off and hand out three pieces of paper and two pencils to each pair.
2. The students will do three timed exercises with their partners. There is no talking during this time. Tell the students that you will tell them when each exercise is over.
3. For the first exercise, ask one of the students to go first. When you tell them to begin, they will take turns making lines on the page and having a “conversation” between the two types of line. It is important that they wait until their partner is finished before taking their turn. Ask them to fill the whole page and be sure to tell them to have the two sets of lines talk to one another. (One line ‘says’ something and the other answers. Show an example.) Time them for a minute and a half.
4. Next, ask the students to have an argument between their lines. One person’s line must get angry or disagree with the other’s line. Time them again for a minute, and then ask the students to make their lines start to agree with one another. Then tell them they must agree with one another. (In other words, they must resolve the argument.)
5. Ask the children how they had a conversation without talking? What kind of lines did they use when they were arguing or disagreeing? How did they make their lines start to agree and then disagree with one another? Did the lines start to look alike? How were their lines different when they were having a conversation compared to arguing? Did the lines say things to each other without words?
6. Ask the students to think about whether there are other ways to say things without words? What other kinds of language are there? What about what they say with their bodies or body language? Can they think of a way that they could use their body to keep someone from playing with them? Or talking to them? How about their faces? Can they make expressions with their faces that keep another child from asking to play with them? Have them show you some of those faces. Are there ways to tell someone with your body language or facial expressions that they are welcome to play? Have them practice this. Are there ways to show someone that you are on their side? Could you put your arm around them? Or that you want them to play with you? Could you turn to face them? Or smile? Or say hi? Ask them to practice these things during the next few days at school and report back to you.

## Day 9: Conflict Resolution - Keith Haring Figures

### Goal:

Students will work together to create a mural that models cooperation and conflict resolution

### Teacher Resource:

“You Can’t Say You Can’t Play” by Vivian Gussin Paley, Harvard Press, 1992.

### Process:

Solving problems in your school and trying to make it safe for everyone, is a GIANT undertaking. How can you do this? After all, you’re just kids! When you’re on the playground or in class, sometimes you don’t want to play with everyone. But playing together is sometimes the best way to get to know someone. Have you ever played with someone and discovered they were really nice after all? Everybody is different. When you play together and work together, you have to work out problems and agree on ideas. People working together can sometimes resemble a big puzzle with each person being a different piece of the puzzle. If everyone works together you can create a big picture out of many different parts. If everyone works together and everyone is allowed to play together, you can have a happier classroom and a nicer school.

1. Show the students pictures of Keith Haring’s paintings. Go to: <http://www.haringkids.com> for appropriate images from his work. Click on ‘books’ and then look at the page entitled ‘teamwork.’ Discuss the poses of the figures and what they seem to be doing. Are the figures connected? Do the figures fit together in some ways? What do the lines outside of the figures represent?
2. Tell the students they are going to make a giant people puzzle. Each student will make a “Keith Haring-like” figure in a pose they like and then they will fit them all together to make the puzzle.
3. Look at Keith Haring’s figures. What are they doing? What are their arms and legs doing? What do they look like? Do they have different faces? Different clothes? Why not? How could they make figures like his?
4. Have them lie on the floor and try out a pose or two.
5. Have them draw the poses on a piece of paper. Encourage them to try drawing them like Haring: simple shapes, outlines, few details.
6. Collect the students’ drawings and lay them out so the whole class can look at them. Remind them that many different poses are possible.
7. Have the students lie down on the floor again trying out their favorite pose. Now have the students try to fit together like the pieces of a puzzle. Have them scrunch together and try to make very little room between them. What happened to the pose they picked? Did they have to change it? Did they fit exactly together? No—there will be some spaces between the finished figures, just as in Haring’s work. You want them to retain their individual pose-their individuality-while still fitting together. How can they best do this?
8. On the floor lay out life sized pieces of paper. (Best if cut from a roll.) Have the students pair-off and take turns tracing each other in the pose they have selected.

Use very light pencil or vine charcoal that is easily erased or wiped off. Have them do a loose outline of the body, reminding them of Keith Haring's figures.

9. Have the students go back and change the outlines so they are simple—like Haring's.

## Day 10: Keith Haring Figures Part II

### Goal:

Students will work together to create a mural that models cooperation and conflict resolution

### Process:

1. Pass out the life-size figures that the students made last period. Have the students paint their figures. This is the time to go over color mixing and primary colors. Ask them to paint their figures in bright colors.
2. Have the students paint a black outline around the figures. Set them aside to dry.
3. Roll out a piece of paper on the floor large enough to have all the figures fit on it.
4. Have the students paint the background in a way that you chose. It could be that they start with a color and then add white to it to change it across the mural, or they add a different color to make it warmer or cooler. Make it age appropriate.

## Day 11: Keith Haring Figures Part III

### Goal:

Students will work together to create a mural that models cooperation and conflict resolution

### Process:

1. Take the figures that the students painted, and for very young children, cut out the figures before the next period. For older children, have the students cut out their figures from the paper.
2. Have the students take turns placing their figures on the paper. How can they make them fit together? Ask them to consider orienting them in different ways on the background-sideways, upside down, etc... How can they decide when they are finished?
3. When they like the placement of the figures assist them with gluing them in place.
4. Have the students add any lines of energy or emotion to the finished mural.
5. Ask the students how their people fit together? How did they decide? Were they all happy? Did some have to compromise? How can they use this way of working together to better play together? Point out some of the techniques used to have everyone involved: taking turns, respecting each other's opinions, listening when someone was speaking, etc...

## Day 12: Amulets

### Goal:

Students will create amulets to keep them safe. They will learn about amulets and their uses in different cultures.

### Process:

What can I do to keep myself safe? What have other cultures done to stay safe? What about objects with magical powers? Do they really work? Or do they just make us feel better? If you could make an amulet to wear what characteristics would it need to protect you?

1. Show students images of tribal African men and modern African American men wearing amulet pendants.  
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=33>  
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=57>  
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=64>  
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=88>  
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=91>  
<http://www.skinz.org/celebrity/50-cent/50-cent-03.gif>  
[http://www.desktopexchange.com/gallery/albums/50-Cent-wallpaper/50Cent\\_pictures\\_5.jpg](http://www.desktopexchange.com/gallery/albums/50-Cent-wallpaper/50Cent_pictures_5.jpg)
2. Explain the long history of amulets. Discuss their magical powers and the beliefs of those who wear them: They will be kept safe.
3. Discuss the belief in the magical powers of animals (Meso-American and Aztec cultures) and the use of imaginary animals to protect tribes and villages.
4. Look at the components that make up the amulets. Get the children to brainstorm about the animals and their human traits that we assign to them. (Middle School Vocabulary: anthropomorphize)
5. Ask the children to list (either as a group or individually) the traits that would protect them and keep them safe. (i.e. lions are brave and fierce.)
6. Have the children choose several traits from their lists they would like to include in their animal amulet.
7. Demonstrate how to make a palm-sized slab and shape it over a styrofoam peanut (so that it is not too thick for drying.) Demonstrate how to score and slip the clay in order to attach different pieces. Encourage the students to try unusual combinations of characteristics.
8. Give each student a small piece of clay (2 x 2 x 2"), a piece of wax paper to work on, a toothpick, a plastic knife, a packing peanut, and a cup of water.
9. After softening clay and getting the feel of it, flatten clay by dropping it on the table surface.
10. Cut out or shape clay into a mask shape and fit over packing peanut to make it three dimensional.
11. Add decorations and facial features to mask by modeling and attaching shapes, incising with a toothpick, and adding coils or other cut shapes. Use thin strands for hair and whiskers, triangles for ears, etc...
12. Poke a hole through the top of the mask for stringing with leather.

13. Inscribe initials with a toothpick on the back.
14. Dry, fire, glaze and then re-fire or use paint and self hardening clay.

## Day 13: Final Project

### Goal:

Students will create paintings or collages based on their knowledge of line, shape, color, words and emotion.

### Process:

1. Put out the students' exercises addressing line, shape, color, and words.
2. Have them review their work.
3. How can they best use this knowledge to create a piece of art that expresses how they feel about safety in school? Which of the exercises did they find the most interesting? What elements do they want to include from them? Do they want to make a collage or a painting? Do they want to include words? What types of images will they use? Will it be abstract shapes or realistic imagery?
4. What will be their subject matter? Have them write how they feel about this issue after all the discussions and exercises they have done. What is most important to them? What do they want to say about it?
5. Have them write a list of the elements they want to incorporate in their final project. What materials will they use to convey their ideas?
6. Have the students answer some of these questions in their sketchbooks or on a piece of paper. Have them make a sketch of what they want to make.
7. Assist the students in creating their final project. Encourage the students to branch out and think outside the box to create something not discussed yet in class.