



Case Study

Fine Arts Interdisciplinary Resource School

National Urban Alliance Collaboration with West Metro Education Program

Overview

Client

Fair Arts Interdisciplinary Resource School (FAIR) is part of West Metro Education Program (WMEP) a consortium of 11 urban and suburban school districts. The Fine Arts Interdisciplinary Resource (FAIR) School is a magnet school for students in grades 4-8. FAIR School is one of two schools created by the WMEP to provide intercultural learning opportunities for student from Minneapolis and surrounding suburban school districts.

Goals and Objectives

The goal was to focus on specific strategies to create continuity between classes and students throughout the whole school. My work with FAIR built upon a previous collaboration with a Seattle elementary school building a whole school collaboration built on communication, consistent vision, and commonalities with methods.

Challenges

As a public arts middle school there were a wide range of disciplines within the arts, math, language arts, science, social science, and physical education to support student learning and cultural understanding.

Action

Pedagogical Strategies

The sessions worked with specific strategies that could be used across disciplines and grade levels. Strategies included:

- Thinking Maps,
- Idea Books, and
- Structured Inquiry.

In between whole group sessions, the regular school site visits included workshops with smaller groups focused on the specific strategies, demonstration lessons in the classrooms, sharing resources of implementing strategies, and clarifying concepts. The whole FAIR staff was involved with the initial workshops and other sessions during the three years consulting.

Techniques

The staff regularly did community building exercises at staff meetings. We collaborated on bringing this same focus into the classrooms. I led many demonstration lessons and various staff members also adopted the role. At the briefing prior to the demonstration lessons we visually mapped our lesson agenda including techniques to involve the whole class. These techniques – briefing and follow through - were then discussed at the debriefings.

Outcomes

Results

The strength of the school is the wide range of interesting backgrounds of the staff, and harnessing their excellent perspectives and implementations of strategies that connected with the students between different classes and disciplines.

Continuing Results

A staff member became a Trainer of Trainers to continue and expand Thinking Maps use in the school.

New Ideas

The wide range of art and core disciplines working together to improve their pedagogy created many new ideas to explore and implement. The staff collaboration at the sessions supported a deeper understanding between the various disciplines and how to support each other.

