

Arts Assessment For Learning

VISUAL ARTS — 4TH GRADE

HOW TO & TIPS: SCULPTURE: PAPIER MACHE-BIRDS

First, it's easy! The rubric helps students think about what they need to do, and how to do it. Their peers love to help too. Asking someone for their advice is great for developing language skills and collaboration in the studio.

Tip to Build Independence - **Three before Me Rule**: Tell your students to: *Ask three other people in the studio, before you ask me.*

Visual rubrics work too:

- Show four papier mache sculptures in various stages of completion and ask students to organize them in art-making sequence.
- Afterwards, ask how the arrangement was determined. This allows students to reflect on the process and use the language being developed around the sculpture, i.e., construction, balance, and attachments.
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Finally, the use of a learning journal, or sketchbook, is a tool that can be used with Kindergartners on up. Drawing and reflecting gives them their own resource to check back on what they need to be doing during the working time.

The Bird Sculpture Project

- Approximately 10 sessions, including initial research study of bird.

1. Observe images of birds [googled] and pass around bird sculptures - collected from previous years, as models for what students will construct.

Students and teacher co-create a list charted on the Smartboard or chart paper, representing various levels of quality of a three-dimensional sculpture and potential "problems we might have." This list will become the rubric establishing criteria for success. e.g., sculpture does not balance, attachments are loose, etc.

2. After a demonstration, students begin constructing the paper and tape armature that will support the paper mache. Emphasis is put on the criteria outlined in the rubric. Students help each other. At the conclusion of the work period, teacher prompts students to reflect in their journal by asking: *What did you learn today? What do you need to do next week?*

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3. Collect criteria and create descriptive levels 4-1 for each criterion you select. Type and copy for students.

4. Next work session, the Building the Sculpture Rubric is distributed and glued into each student's learning journal. Focus is on one or two criteria at a time, e.g., balanced, or are legs securely attached? Teacher demonstrates and guides the wrapping of the paper body, attachment of head, wings, tail, and finally aluminum wire legs. At each point students support and help each other in partnerships.

5-8. Attaching papier-mâché. Students help each other in this process - as some are much better and more comfortable with the medium than others. The rubric is posted on the smart board and reviewed. Teacher demonstrates the use of papier mache attachment to the armature. Questions arise about the gooey substance (we use methyl cellulose, a plant based powder which dissolves in water) and texture (it is an ingredient in shampoo and looks and feels like it). Does it wash out? (Yes)

9-12. Painting. Groups are created around birds of similar colors (i.e. blue jays and bluebirds, cardinals and tanagers, sparrows and chickadees) to facilitate sharing of painting materials, and rubric defines how to paint a sculpture. Teacher and students study an image of a painted bird sculpture. How did the artist do it? The process is deconstructed by the students and teacher charts their responses (i.e., a solid color is painted underneath, patterns overlap,). Students share ideas within their groups about how to achieve particular pattern markings and colors.

13. Reflection at end about the sculpture, which poses the question: *What could you change or improve in your painting?* (See video: Benny's chickadee.) As students feel their bird sculptures nearing completion, they ask each other, what else needs to happen? This question is part of the daily closure on the sculpture project. Student revisions continue throughout the painting process until the final flourish of white highlights in the eyes and yellow toenails on their claws.

RESOURCES: <http://gaatha.com/papier-mache-bird-ujjain/>

<http://www.livestream.com/cornellherons>

[google papier-mâché birds](#)

Reflective opportunities with selected students during open studio times will focus on specific changes students can make to their birds. Using the Smart Board to display the rubric at the beginning of each class reminded students to consult their learning journals.