



Dylan's Saving Squad resources

Art Commissions Project

Teacher's Guide



At the 7-9 level of this programme, learners develop on the foundational themes of earning and spending, by exploring choices. Learners consider the choices they can make about how they spend and earn money such as saving, donating, different jobs, etc. This project allows learners to experience enterprise as a means of earning money, whilst inspiring learners with the idea that they have valuable, marketable skills. The Art Commission Project focuses on the simplest form of business. The creation of a physical product to sell. The learners can create a product, without need for expensive resources or expertise, by capitalising on the charm of a child's drawing.

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Preparation

Method of sales

You will first need to decide on the form that the project will take, which will ultimately be dictated by the process of selling the artwork. There are a number of options, but you may wish to use one of the following four suggestions.

Homework project

Provide the learners with the structure and instruction for the project but allow them to undertake the commissions at home with friends and family.

Order forms

Provide learners with a take-home form for parents to complete, and attach payment for the commissions. The children will then undertake the artwork in school.

School fair

You may wish to set up an artist's area at a school event, where visitors can sit for a portrait.

Public sale

With the necessary considerations for appropriate safeguarding, the learners may benefit tremendously from a public art sale. This can be achieved in partnership with a local gallery or museum, or by transforming the school into a temporary evening gallery. Learners' artwork from across the school can be displayed in an art show style, and learners can offer portraits during the event. The spectacle and excitement of such an event, can provide a powerful and inspirational setting to enhance the project. The addition of an art competition could engage the wider school in the project.

Safeguarding

Necessary considerations should be made to ensure that the project is run safely, in line with your school's safeguarding policy. Similarly, a risk assessment of any off-site activities would likely be necessary.

Profit

The project should not incur any substantial costs, so any income would be considered a profit. At this level, the aim is not to introduce any complex business themes, but instead to explore entrepreneurial opportunities. If you have chosen a homework project, there will be no money exchanged within the school, however, if adopting a different approach, you should consider how any money earned will be spent. You may wish to simply return the earnings to the individual learners, or to put the money towards a class resource or trip. In which case, a letter to the parents, clearly outlining the intention, along with the educational rationale for the project, would be beneficial from the offset.

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What is art?

Begin the project with a simple introduction to the concept of art.

The arts can be music, dance or any other creative expression. Art is simply a way of expressing a feeling, an idea, a thought or even a question. Works of art are all trying to say something, without actually 'saying' it.

Visual arts are works of art that are meant to be seen. Things like paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs or even films.

People like to have art that makes them feel good or that looks beautiful. 'Beautiful art' looks different to different people. Everybody likes different styles of art.

Ask the learners to explore different works of art and find three paintings. One that they like, one that surprises them and one that makes them feel something.

There are a number of suitable, child-friendly websites for exploring art, including www.tate.org.uk/kids. Learners can explore a wide variety of artists via the 'Explore' tab.

The intention of the task is to surprise and inspire learners by challenging their preconceptions about what is 'beautiful art'.

How can you turn art into a job?

Following on from the Dress for the job learning activity, introduce the job of an Artist.

Some people create art as a hobby. Some people turn that hobby into a job. They earn money by making art and selling it.

Lots of people like to buy art. People buy art to make their homes look nice or to make them feel happy. Artists sell art in two ways. They either create it, and then sell it or people pay them to make something that they want. This is called a commission. A person might ask an artist to paint a picture of their family, or their dog.

Engage learners in the concept of buying art by exploring examples within your local community. For example, art in your homes, city centre commissions, etc.

Project introduction

Now that you have explored art, artists and commissions, hopefully the learners are suitably inspired. Introduce the project to the class. We are going to become artists! People will commission us to create portraits. Advise the students how and/or where they will be selling their portraits. Before we can start, we need to work out answers to these questions. What art will we produce? How will we find customers? How much will we charge for our art? What will we do with the profit?

Start with the first question. Create a class mind map to shortlist types of art that could be produced, before agreeing a type and medium for all of the commissions.

The method of sale will, ultimately, determine the parameters of the types of art and the mediums that will be appropriate. For example, painted portraits would not be suitable for a gallery event due to the cost of materials, potential for mess, and customers trying to take a wet painting home. Guide the students to a consensus for an appropriate choice.

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Art visit

Where possible, a visit from a local artist or a visit to a local artist studio, will offer an impactful experience for the learners. Learners can use this visit to learn about how an artist uses commissions, how they attract customers and how/why they became an artist. There may also be an opportunity for an art workshop, to help the learners find their own artistic style.

Marketing

How will we find customers?

Ask the class to first consider why people would buy their art, for example:

- To decorate their homes
- Because it makes them feel happy
- To support the school
- To encourage the children
- As keepsakes for friends and family
- To send to family, who live away

Now that you have established a list of **motivations**, elicit ideas from the class about how to **attract** customers, such as:

- Posters
- Flyers
- Letters to parents
- Press – local newspapers may write an article about an upcoming event of local interest

With your method of sale in mind, agree a suitable avenue to communicate with your **customers**.

Ask learners to design/draft their letter, flyer, etc to **encourage** people to buy their art. Draw on the **motivations** that they identified.

If you are planning to sell art at an event, ask learners to create signs and posters for their table, including example portraits. Learners could create portraits of one another to use for this purpose and to experiment with their style.

Taking commissions

As a class, discuss a suitable price for their commissions. You may need to manage expectations by highlighting the value of the experience over monetary gain. Referring back to the buying motivations, sentimental or philanthropical motivations would not attract a high price, rather the value of a donation, e.g. under £5.

Engage learners in the process of taking commissions, whether at an event, via an order form or as a home activity. For example, support learners to create a sign-up sheet or order form.

Discuss the decision about how to spend the profit made from the project, where applicable. You could potentially introduce an additional learning opportunity by exploring the value of pooling money to achieve an overall greater gain.

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Producing artwork

You will need to plan for the necessary resources to create the portraits in the setting you have chosen. For example, in an event setting, you may need to source easels or suitably sized tables for the learners. You will also need to clearly communicate how learners sign their artwork, making the necessary safeguarding considerations. For example, first names only or adopting an individual symbol.

Conclusion

Celebrate the end of the project with a recap on the learners' achievements.

- How much money was raised
- How the money will be spent
- How well their marketing worked (number of customers)
- Any press that the project attracted

A nice idea to finalise the project is to create a visual representation of what has been learned. You will need a large piece of white poster paper and a number of green fine tip pens or pencils. With the poster paper in portrait orientation, ask learners to write what they learned in short sentences running from the very left edge of the paper. Then turn the poster to landscape view. The sentences become grass and plants growing from the ground and represent the growth of the learners. Add drawings of flowers, butterflies, dandelion clocks, and additional blades of grass to decorate.

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