With the reality of school being closed due to the Coronavirus/Corvid19 public health emergency I have drafted some plans and ideas for art activities that could be done from home. I have designed different plans for 4 age groups; Kindergarten, First-Second grade, third grade, and fourth graders.

**Kindergarten:**
This age group only visits the art room for a half hour every other week. Our art time together is all about being introduced to a variety of art-media and the care and procedures for developing techniques with each media. If your home has art materials such as crayons, markers, paints or clay this age group loves to learn “how-to” use different materials and how to care for them properly. If you bring out materials for some art time- have your child tell you (teach you) how the materials are to be cared for and some of their “tricks” (techniques). Like how markers should be capped good so they don’t dry out, how crayons can be peeled to use the “wide-on-the-side trick. Even simple pencils have their own “rules and tricks”, like how to sharpen them properly and how if you press harder they can go darker and if you press lightly they can make a value of gray. Whatever they can find to make art with is good for these kinds of discussions and activities.

**First and Second grade:**
Students in this age group have been learning about “The Art Elements” in our Art classes. These are like the “ingredients” of art. All Art is made up of these either alone or in some combination. They are Line, Shape, Value, Color, Texture, Pattern, Form, and Space. Try to create different drawings that feature each Art Element. For example,

**LINES:**
On one side of a paper - practice drawing as many different kinds of lines from our earlier lessons. Think of descriptive words (Adjectives) that “describe” the lines; straight, curvy, thin, thick, wavy, zig-zag, squiggly, bumpy, dotted, spiky, and so on. On the other side of the paper-draw a picture that uses the various lines you’ve practiced. (perhaps something like a car on a bumpy road with spiky grass and fluffy trees and bushes, puffy clouds in the sky and a wavy river running by.)

**VALUE:**
Also known as “tones” or “Shades”, This is the Element that deals with light, medium, or dark. Every medium or art supply achieves this scale through different techniques. For example pencils are great at this- depending on how hard you press when you fill in a shape you can create light, medium or dark values where as with paints you would either water-down a color or add white to it to tint it down lighter. Pens or markers achieve this through cross-hatching lines over lines, the fewer lines more spread apart creates a light value, more lines overlapping each other closely creates a darker value. Have your child draw a “tonal-scale” where they draw a ladder (with 4 or 5 runs on it) along the side of a paper and fill in each square on the ladder with a different gray, gradually going from light, to medium -light, to medium, to medium-dark, to black. Then have them create a drawing that uses at least 3 different tones or values instead of
color. Shapes should be filled in, the only parts that should still be white are things that should be white like teeth or clouds.

PATTERNS/TEXTURES:
In class students were given a hand-out that showed a collection of small squares each filled with a different pattern or texture made of lines. To describe each verbally would be a challenge but they should be able to remember the ones we identified for their uses such as stripes, polka dots, wavy line pattern, spiky grass-lines, brick pattern, fish-scales, bumps, spikes, net-pattern like on a soccer goal, furry, squiggly pattern, and so on. Students can do a practice paper where they try to remember and draw various line patterns and textures again, using adjectives/ descriptive words to identify each as I've listed. Then on the other side of the paper they can create a drawing that makes use of as many patterns and textures as they can think of. (For example they might draw a mermaid with fish-scale pattern on her fish- half with long wavy hair sitting on a bumpy rock with waves all around and a furry seal pup in her lap.)

COLOR:
Color might not be available in every household, understandably. But if there are crayons or markers around that's great. In this age group students are being encouraged to organize their tools in a way that resembles the color spectrum or the rainbow. We dump a bunch of crayons, pastels, or markers out and immediately begin to organize them on a tray in the order of the rainbow (color-spectrum). Students like to make little piles, a reds-pile, a blues-pile and so on. They learn that there are many different reds and different blues. They learn terms like “warm-colors” and “cool-colors”. By arranging their colors in order they reinforce that knowledge of the spectrum and make better color choices. (like when deciding which blue should I use for the sky and which should I choose for the water?) Usually at this time of year they hear the legend of “ROY G BIV”, the Lepracon who's riddle involves the “colors of his name” as a clue to the where about of his pot of gold; R=red, O=orange, Y=yellow, G=green, B=blue, I=indigo (a bluish-purple) and V=violet (a relish-violet). Again, this drawing should be about color. So naming colors, describing them with words that others can identify with is all good color-knowledge. Children often like to identify colors with food, like butter-yellow, cotton-candy pink, chocolate- brown, and so on. The colors should inspire what they draw and they should be able to explain why they chose to color things as they have.

SHAPE:
The best way to have children practice working with shapes is through collage, scissors, paper, and glue. Now, I know a lot of families don’t let younger children handle scissors and certainly not glue. They can make a terrible mess if not used properly or without a grown up to supervise but they do love it. We talk about the difference between tools and toys and go over all safety do’s and don’ts in art class before anyone is allowed to handle these. Using scissors is a great fine-motor exercise, and collage is a great creative-problem solving exercise for young artists. By creating complex shapes (like a dog or a house) out of a collection of simple shapes (like squares, circles, ovals, and triangles) students can practice constructing imagery like a puzzle, with pieces that go together to make a whole something. At school we have shelves of colored construction paper and a scrap box full of colors. Construction paper may not be something every home has but If there are old magazines, wall paper scraps, wrapping paper, even fabric scraps around collage is doable. I would however, limit children to Elmers or school
grade glues, never let young children handle superglue, Gorilla glue, or other industrial strength products. When I was a child my Mom used to whip up a batch of wheat-paste glue that was just flour mixed with corn starch and water to a workable consistency. It’s great for papier-mâché.

FORM:

Form is an Art Element that refers to all things “3-D”. Forms are not shapes, shapes are flat, forms are 3-D. Artists can create the illusion of 3-D forms through a complex system of perspective lines and shading that are really for older students. At this age level we explore FORM with modeling clay. Again, not many homes have clay or play-dough but it is really popular with students and relatively inexpensive. It is sold wherever school supplies are sold. Crayola makes the best and a box of 4 colors is less than $10. The great thing about modeling clay is that is performs much better than play-dough, it is very responsive and reusable. One box of clay can last years because like Legos, when you’re done making one thing you can destroy it and make something else over and over again. It doesn’t dry out or harden so you can keep reusing and reusing it. It is an oil-based product though, and you will want to use a surface that can be wiped down after use because it could leave a grease stain if left sitting. Keep it in a resealable bag or tupperware container. Form can also be explored with paper sculpture, building 3-D forms or “pop-ups” is popular. Many students prefer to assemble with tape because they don’t like the mess and wait-time with glue.

SPACE:

The Element of SPACE is somewhat challenging to communicate to younger students. Showing the distance between things, some close up, some far away, is difficult to communicate with out visuals to analyze and discuss what the artist did to create the effect of spacial-depth. We do this in fourth grade. With younger students we talk about background, using overlapping to show that something is in front of something else. It’s good to encourage this age student to consider adding background to a picture to make it look more “done”. They often just draw a character or animal floating alone on an empty page. I have students think of what things would be in the background to support the viewer’s understanding of the picture. You can use guiding questions like “where do tigers live?” What kind of trees are in it’s environment?” Or “Is this an outside or an inside picture?” What clues could you add to help people know where this is?”

By choosing a particular Art Element for students to focus on, it can serve as a motivator for creativity. Sometimes students don’t know what to draw and just need a little criteria or theme to get started. By presenting a challenge like “draw an outside picture that uses lines to create patterns and textures”, students can draw what they want but have a challenge that will exercise their creative problem solving and expressive skills.

THIRD GRADE:

Third graders were just getting started on a fun art project before the announcement of the school closure. They are all making puppets. Students at this stage of development can be rather impulsive and tend to change their minds a lot while thinking creatively. We don’t have an endless supply of materials to waste so we do a lot of thinking on paper before we start grabbing materials and cutting and gluing things. We follow a Creative Process. Students first do a Brainstorming page”, where they sketch a collection of several, different original characters
from their imagination on a large sheet of paper. An artist isn’t done brainstorming until they get that lightbulb idea, that idea they are excited about. It may only take 4-5 sketches to find your inspiration or it could take several. Once they have created at least four to choose from they can pick a favorite character and begin planning it’s look in a diagram sketch where they label each feature or part with what material they can use to build it. So, they might write the words “Yellow yarn” with an arrow pointing to their character’s hair, or “cardboard tube” with an arrow pointing to it’s torso. Students were then sent home with a list of materials to scavenge for around the house and collect. Many brought in a bag of stuff to use and contributed extra stuff to our puppet “store” where they can take anything they need for their constructions. Unfortunately the store is in the art room and inaccessible. But the whole idea of the unit was to encourage students to be resourceful, to recycle, reuse, and repurpose materials the way so many real artists do. So hopefully they can have fun scavenging, collecting and constructing a puppet with what they can find around the house. Small lunch bags, paper towel or TP tubes, small boxes, and socks were the choices of base-forms we had discussed. I demonstrated how to wrap tube or small box with colored paper and how to use glue so it dries faster and doesn’t get too messy. We discussed the importance of pre-planning and working in layers or steps, big things first, details last. If you have a hot glue gun that is great for adhering fabric or plastic but I don’t let young ones handle such a tool. Even the “low-temp” ones can burn. Parent or guardian assistance is needed for this tool. Just be careful not to “over-help” as some students are highly skilled at getting grownups to do it all for them. Have them tell you where to glue things and make most of the decisions on their own. Independent problem solving is the most rewarding part of this activity for the students.

FOURTH GRADE:

The fourth graders are doing a variety of drawing and painting projects for the art show this year. Paints are not something most homes are going to have sitting around so I don’t expect many to practice at home. If they have them great, paint away! But if not they can work on developing their drawing skills. All the Monday fourth grades are doing “life-drawing”, or drawing from observation. One group is doing still-life subjects, one is drawing the human figure, and another is focusing on portraits. The figure and face drawing groups had a lesson and demo about proportions. So not everyone was working on the same subject matter. The same skills can be applied to whatever subject students want to draw, so long as they are looking directly at their subject when they draw it. It is important that these students work with pencil and erasers. The technique of sketching requires the artist to begin very lightly, gradually editing and fixing, erasing and refining with darker lines and working in this way requires pencil. I want them to practice using their “critical-eye” to see inaccuracies, diagnose what’s wrong, plan how to fix it and keep erasing and fixing until it looks right. When drawing in the art room I gave each artist a tip-sheet with simplified steps to guide them through the process. They should read this right before they start drawing to remind themselves of the “tricks”.

1. Set up your subject to the view you want to draw. Lock in that “point of view” and don’t move your head or the subject. PRE-visualize. Imagine the image on the page before you make any marks. “Air-draw” over the surface of the paper with your pencil to plan your composition (sizes and placements of things). Remember to use your “internal-dialogue” to describe what your eyes see. “The elbow is slightly higher than the wrist” or “the edge of the mouth is directly under the pupil of the eye” kind of dialogue.
2. Be critical as you draw. Check the relationships of things for accuracy. How do the parts "line-up" with other parts vertically and horizontally? Make changes or corrections with slightly darker lines (restating) then erase earlier lines when satisfied with the new, better lines. Keep making fixes and corrections, talking to yourself in your mind as you draw, observe, describe, draw. Observe, describe, draw. ("The left foot is back behind the right foot so I don't see the shoe laces and it's slightly higher. I have to move that "D"-shape of the toe of the shoe up higher.")

3. Once you've got everything the right size and in the right place, go over your light pencil lines with darker lines. Erase away any unwanted lines cleanly. You can refine the drawing in pencil by adding Values or tones. If you have a black marker you can go over your pencil lines and erase all the pencil lines. If you have colored pencils and want to add colors that's fine. They can be used to create values of color, show shadows with shading, and blend colors.

I hope these art activities are helpful. It's super hard to figure out how to provide in text what I normally do in the classroom setting where I can use visuals and demonstrations to instruct. If students try to remember the things we've talked about in class and practice the tricks we've learned they should have meaningful and rewarding art experiences at home with limited materials. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone again soon and we can get back to our projects. Take care of each other and remember just because art class is not happening doesn't mean you have to turn off your imaginations! Many of you say you don't have time in your regular life-schedules for making art, well now you should be able to find some time to practice. I would like to see something from everyone when we return. Perhaps we can have a slide show of what everyone created while we were out.

Thanks, Mr. Donahoe