

Jennifer Peppe
Art Teacher, Livingston Park School
North Brunswick, New Jersey 08902
732.289.3300 x 4326
jkpeppe@hotmail.com

Oregon International Council
NEH Summer Institute 2004

ART UNIT: In Honor of Mexico The Aztec Calendar

This project is designed for 4th and 5th grade art students. Each student attends art with their homeroom class, once a week for 40 minutes. Dependent upon any schedule interruptions, teachable moments and/or the pace of each class, this project will take approximately 6-7 weeks to complete.

OBJECTIVES:

The learner will demonstrate the ability to (hereafter TLWDAT) identify elements found on an Aztec Calendar such as symbols identifying weather, seasons, holidays and special occasions.

TLWDAT create his or her own representation of the Aztec Calendar using symbols to describe seasons, his or her own life experiences, environment, and any other significant occasions.

STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS:

1. TLWDAT explore the use of symbols as visual representations of events, seasons, etc. Students will practice drawing pictorial images for given words such as cold, valentine, autumn, school, sports, etc.
2. TLWDAT design a circular calendar with concentric circles made with a compass and/ or templates. Each circle stands for one part of calendar, i.e. the circle surrounding the center represents the four seasons. The next greater circle represents the months. The next greater circle represents each student's years of life. The outer most circle represents 'favorites' of the student. Each circle will be divided into its appropriate number of sections with straight lines radiating out from the central point. This will create the sense of radial balance throughout the calendar.
3. TLWDAT draw a self portrait as the central element of the calendar. This self portrait may be stylized with the influence of the Aztec Calendar, depicting a deity or sun god.

VOCABULARY:

(Spanish)

day/ el día week/ la semana month/ el mes year/ el año
life/ la vida family/ la familia birthday/ el cumpleaños holiday/ la fiesta
seasons/ las estaciones colors/ los colores designs/ los diseños

THE FIVE C'S OF NATIONAL STANDARDS:

Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STRANDS:

Culture
Time
Continuity and Change
People, Places, and Environments
Individual Development and Identity
Individuals, Groups and Institutions
Global Connections

CULTURE (with a small 'c'):

Students will participate in class discussions, sharing symbols and significance of special days as represented on his/ her calendar. When sharing artwork, students will begin by greeting the class. "Hola" and "Buenos días" will be readily available on the board for reference. While discussing his or her artwork, each student will be asked to input the appropriate Spanish vocabulary where applicable. For example, when describing his or her birthday symbol, each student will refer to 'el cumpleaños' and state the name of their birthday month in Spanish.

AUTHENTIC MATERIALS:

Various materials gathered in Mexico provide authenticity and visual aid with this lesson. These materials include a 16"x 16" print of Aztec Calendar in color purchased at museum, a 5" x 5" replica of calendar illustrating the relief style of carving that was made into the stone, and several 10 pesos coins revealing a section of the calendar.

CONTEXTUAL FOCUS:

Students will share their ideas and artwork throughout the entire creative process. Students share work with each other and also with the class. We will discuss any observations, similarities and/ or differences as they arise.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

In order to carry out the assignment, students need to know the following:

- Elements/ units of a calendar and their chronological order of occurrence.
- Symbols and how they are used to represent grander ideas.
- How to design the layout of the calendar using concentric circles, center point, radiating lines starting from the center point to divide each section into smaller units. This requires use of a compass, templates and ruler.
- How to express calendar events as a visual image and follow through with application of color using colored pencils.
- How to evaluate artwork and communicate ideas through the critique process as a participant in a class critique of finished work. Students will share their completed calendars and express their likes/ dislikes, positive feedback, and constructive criticism about the project and the work of others.

ACTIVITY AND LEARNING TASKS:

Students will practice and demonstrate acquired knowledge this multi-step Aztec Calendar project. Students will exhibit understanding by participating in discussions about their calendars in small groups, class discussions and one-on-one with the art teacher. Each child's participation in the culminating discussion, class critique, is vital to assessment.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES:

Students will be working at their tables in groups of three or four during this project. The final activity, class critique, will involve the whole class as a larger, more cohesive group.

LEARNING GAMES:

Days of the Week Bingo:

Students will each receive bingo cards made up of days of the week in Spanish, randomly placed in the rows and columns. Students will also have bingo chips. The teacher (or a fellow student) will call out different days of the week in English and if/ when the players can identify the same day on their cards in Spanish, they place a chip in that square. The rules are the same as common bingo.

Seasons/ Las Estaciones – 4 Corners:

Each corner of the art room will be designated as a season. Cards with the names of months in Spanish and different cards with the names of colors in Spanish will be distributed to the students. Students will then be asked to move to a corner of the art room, assigning their months and colors to the appropriate season.

Tag your Birthday (el Cumpleaños) Month:

Students will write their birthdays on a sticky paper. They will then ‘tag’ the appropriate month of their birthday in the front of the art room. We will discuss any observations such as which month has the most birthdays, which students have birthdays in the summer, what birthdays are coming up soon, etc. We will keep this information until the end of the calendar project in order to re-examine students’ birthdays and note the various ways each child represents his or her special day.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

It’s a SYMBOL Language:

Whenever time permits, students may practice their skills of symbol drawing by selecting a card from a basket. Each card will have a description of a special event or occasion on one side. On the other side of the card, students are to interpret the information and draw a corresponding symbol that represents one or more details of the described event.

Example #1 Imagine that you are an Aztec farmer and you have just finished harvesting the biggest and best crop of corn ever. How can you represent this special event?

Example #2 You are an Aztec athlete and captain of the football team. You have a very important game coming up and your team needs to win. What animal might serve your team best as its new mascot? What will the new team logo look like?

Example #3 The Aztecs are expecting a monstrous storm. This storm may even turn into a hurricane causing massive floods and destruction. How can you represent a storm like this?

WEBBING ACTIVITIES:

This project will take place in September and will last approximately six to seven weeks total. It will be linked to the upcoming holiday season and the special events that take place during the school year. This connection will be smooth and natural since the most festive part of the school year takes place between September and January first. Some of the most significant occasions are Back to School, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Fifth Grade Camping Trip to Stokes Forest, Halloween, Election Day, Thanksgiving, Hanukah, Christmas, and New Years. This Aztec Calendar project allows students to recall all the holidays and years that have gone before them and to look forward to the year(s) ahead with all the special days that will be fast approaching. This project promotes a continued sense of reflection regarding how the student as an individual sees himself and daily events as fitting into a bigger picture.

EVALUATION:

The evaluation of this project occurs daily. As described in prior sections, students will be working through a multi-step creative process in order to arrive at a final visual product. Each step of learning will be on some level, visible. While working in small groups, students will continually have each other to discuss and share ideas, even strategies. The art teacher will be present, guiding, and overseeing each step of the process. When a child needs assistance, whether technical or conceptual, there will be help available. There may be occasions when one aspect or another of an assignment may become overly challenging/ frustrating for a student and extra help is needed. Assistance, brainstorming, support is rendered. Learning still takes place. In a visual arts assignment, plenty of room for individual interpretation exists. In an assignment such as this one, both external and self-evaluation take place every step of the way.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT:

Students are responsible for their learning throughout the entire creative process, with opportunities for assessment virtually daily. Daily assessments may come from observations, anecdotal recordings, rubrics, discussions and visual production. The class critique at the end of the project allows for the most comprehensive performance assessment. Students participate in a group critique of all displayed artwork. Students usually volunteer but are occasionally asked to provide feedback about the project in general or a specific piece of work. This class discussion encourages self-expression with an emphasis on positive feedback and constructive criticism. Students are asked to use appropriate vocabulary as it pertains to the specific tasks of the project. Students are required to support their ideas with ‘objective’ examples while making use of the visual information that is displayed before the class. Each student is expected to share his or her ideas about the learning, successes and overall results of the project.

Evaluation Rubric for AZTEC CALENDAR (Spanish Component):

Culture/ use of social mores - 1 point each of possible 5	/5
* hola *gracias *buenos días *me llamo _____	
*other _____	
Calendar / identification of days, months, seasons – 1 point each of possible 25	/25
*lunes *martes *miércoles *jueves *viernes *sábado	
*domingo *enero *febrero *marzo *abril *mayo	
*junio *julio *agosto *septiembre *octubre *noviembre	
*diciembre *primavera *verano *otoño *invierno	
Vocabulary/ other use of language – 1 point each of possible 20	/20
*el cumpleaños *other _____	
Name _____	Total _____ /50