



Workshop Plan: Homeless Youth

VISIONQUILT

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History and Context:

The following activities took place at Maslow Project, a Southern Oregon organization that works with homeless youth and their families to foster well-being, self-sufficiency, and school/life success. This particular workshop series included a group of teens experiencing homelessness, ages 14-18, who were engaged in Maslow's Youth Advisory Council (YAC), which provides recreation and empowerment activities for its members. YAC is a variable yet cohesive group; participants engage in comprehensive support services and activities offered at Maslow Project's drop-in Resource Center. Workshop meetings included YAC mentors, and Maslow's Art Therapist, who had actively worked on trust building, self-expression, leadership and life skills with YAC members, for approximately six months. A week before the Vision Quilt workshop, a Maslow YAC facilitator discussed the Vision Quilt project and explained how the teenagers could participate. She showed the Maslow teens examples of Vision Quilt panels. The teens and facilitators met in the art studio after their customary dinner for two sessions with Vision Quilt staff, followed by two sessions with Maslow facilitators. As an ongoing group, ground rules were understood: respect, confidentiality, no judgments, and collaboration. The Vision Quilt facilitator role was to enhance their experience engaging around gun violence.

Objectives

Participants will:

- Learn about activist art, and the power of art to evoke powerful feelings within the viewer and stimulate social change
- Establish ground rules around talking about art and others' experiences
- View Vision Quilt panels and reflect on the impact of gun violence on their personal lives and in their communities
- Generate possible solutions to preventing gun violence through short, visual exercises, followed by discussion. These activities will allow students' voices to be heard and introduce the power of art to create dialogue and social change.
- Create their own 18 x 24-inch panels, with modeled, guided support
- Offer ideas on how to involve others in making Vision Quilt panels in the future

Session #1: Introductions and Overview of Vision Quilt Project

Setting the Stage: 10 minutes

Introductions:

Overview of project, why project was started and hopes for the four sessions.

Give students this info:

The Vision Quilt is a national grassroots project using the power of art to prevent gun violence. You will be creating panels for the Vision Quilt using spray paint, drawing, painting, stencils and the power of writing, with visiting artists offering guidance and support.

No art experience is needed.

Your Vision Quilt panels will become part of the national Vision Quilt and displayed in community centers, libraries, places of worship, etc. The panels will also be used in rallies, vigils and marches.

Show image of AIDS quilt panel displayed on Mall in Washington, D.C. in 1987.

Tell participants they are helping to create a model for other youth in the future. Their ideas, panels and feedback will shape this national project.

Introduce theme of Vision Quilt Project: “It is possible...”

Engaging with the Project: 15 minutes

Display 15-20 Vision Quilt panels. Have participants walk among the panels and stand by one that they either like, dislike, or one that speaks to them. Ask individual students to comment on the panel they have chosen. Make time for personal anecdotes about gun violence. Have VQ members tell the story behind the panel as appropriate.

Ask group: “What is the power of these panels?”

Delving Deeper: 25 minutes

Handout: Share statistics about gun violence in the US and in your city/town. Point out comparisons with other countries having different gun laws. Think about 100 people in a room: This many would be murdered by a gun in a year... This many would be wounded... This many would die from suicide... This many would...

Students begin to sketch their panel ideas on 18x24-inch newsprint.

Reflection: 10 minutes

What is the power of art? What is the power of these Vision Quilt panels?

Session #2: Introduction to theme of Vision Quilt, generating potential solutions to preventing gun violence, transfer ideas to canvas, paint, draw, panels

Setting the Stage: 10 minutes

Review what we did in last session and what we are going to accomplish today.

Show 15 different Vision Quilt panels. Pick one panel. What do you think this person is saying? How do these panels make you feel?

Engaging with the Project: 10 minutes

Continue the theme of Vision Quilt Project: “It is possible....”

Brainstorm things people did not think were possible, but have become possible since they were born.

Connect the idea of it being possible to change our gun culture and increasing gun violence. Add some ideas here in case participants get stuck. Point out the necessity to have a vision in order to create change.

Delving Deeper: 50 minutes

Point out various techniques used in panels. Demonstrate how to work with fabric paints, acrylics, stencils, rubber stamps, needle and thread, etc. Point out the use of background colors in specific panels that emphasizes the message in the panels. Think about what background color. Work with individuals, as needed, to realize their ideas on their panels.

With the help of volunteers, each reading one line aloud, read Kim Stafford’s poem, “Proclamation to Peace” which has become the anthem of our project. Note: Assess the comfort level of the youth with this part of the workshop. Consider reading level, many individuals read at a 5th-grade level, complex poetry can be intimidating, so allow members to “pass”. Tell them it was set with metal type and letterpress printed on an antique printing press.

Workshop Plan: Homeless Youth continued

Reflection: 10 minutes

Acknowledge their work, cooperation and creativity and thank them for their support. Let them know that there will be two more sessions to continue working on their panels with Maslow facilitators available.

Discuss the importance of telling stories and request that each of them write a statement about their panel. Some participants had written artist statements for other work, so they were asked to assist others in writing these statements. Explain to participants that Vision Quilt panels will be exhibited with their artist statements in the future.