



Workshop Plan: Incarcerated Youth

VISIONQUILT

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History and Context:

Vision Quilt was invited to work with the incarcerated youth at the Camp Sweeney Detention Center from Alameda County in the San Francisco Bay Area. Examples of Vision Quilt panels were displayed before the session started so the students would know what they were expected to do and to tell them they would be part of a national grassroots project. The students were told that Camp Sweeney staff hopes some day to make Vision Quilt panels with their families.

The Camp Sweeney staff decided to make all four consecutive sessions mandatory. Permission was obtained from youth and parents of participants under the age of 18 and project release agreements were signed before the sessions began. Sessions were 90 minutes each with the fourth session extended until all students had completed their panels. Throughout the planning and the sessions, the Vision Quilt staff worked closely with parole officers and staff.

Dr. Michael Bell, Emergency Room physician from Children's Hospital Oakland, California was invited to speak to the youth in Session Three. He talked candidly about what he encounters in the ER at Children's Hospital as a result of gun violence. Dr. Bell engaged the participants and asked them pointed questions.

The Beat Within is a journal that publishes the art and writing of incarcerated youth. The Beat Within offered the Vision Quilt an opportunity to publish the artist statements of these participants along with a photograph of their Vision Quilt panel. Prior approval was obtained by parents for this publication. The teens were excited about this opportunity.

A few weeks after the panel making, the students' panels were exhibited at the Camp Sweeney Open House, attended by parents, friends, Camp Sweeney supporters and staff of the Alameda County Probation Department. Unfortunately, one of the students who made a panel and was released from Camp Sweeney, was murdered before the Open House. The discussion of his panel by the other youth during the Open House was a significant experience for all.

Objectives:

Students will:

- 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 and written 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 their families 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.

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.

Review ground rules for sessions:

Respect

Everyone participates: Staff and youth

Confidentiality: What is said in room, stays in room

Ground rules are agreed upon before session starts

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.

Engaging with the Project: 25 minutes

Display 15-20 Vision Quilt panels. Have students 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. Have Vision Quilt members tell the story behind the panel as appropriate.

Ask group: What is the power of these panels?

Delving Deeper: 45 minutes

Handout: Share statistics about gun violence in the U.S. and in your city/town. 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 draw their panel ideas on 18x24-inch newsprint.

Reflection: 10 minutes

Hand out handmade journals. Explain who made these journals: four women who make books for youth around the world.

Ask youth to write in their journal: draw pictures, draw cartoons, write sentences. What is one thing you learned during this session? What is the power of these panels? Can art change anything?

What did you like best? What could we do better next time?

Session #2: Introduction to Theme of Vision Quilt: Generating Potential Solutions to Preventing Gun Violence/Spray Painting Panels

Setting the Stage: 20 minutes

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

Show 15 different Vision Quilt panels. Stand by one panel that speaks to you. What do you think this person is saying? How do these panels make you feel?

Engaging with the Project: 10 minutes

Introduce theme of Vision Quilt Project: "It is possible...."

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Ask: what changes have taken place since you were born that no one thought was possible in the year you were born. List things that folks did not think were possible, but became possible since they were born. Connect the idea of it being possible to change our gun culture and preventing gun violence. Add some ideas here in case youth get stuck. Point out the necessity to have a vision in order to create change. Remind them of visionaries such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and what he accomplished because of his vision.

Delving Deeper: 50 minutes

Divide students into two groups. Give each group chart paper to record ideas. Ask the groups to list ways people have helped prevent violence or gun violence; list ways people have escalated violence or gun violence.

Ask spokesperson from each subgroup to report out what their small group listed. Give students time to incorporate some of these ideas into their sketches. Discuss the concept of making choices in everyday decision making.

Point out various techniques used in panels. Demonstrate how to work with fabric paints, acrylics, stencils, making rubber stamps, needle and thread, etc. Point out that this is what they will be doing in session #3 and #4.

Point out the use of background colors in specific panels that emphasizes the message in the panels. Think about what background color you want on your panel. Take two students outside at a time to spray paint panels.

Reflection: 10 minutes

Ask them to write in their journal:

What surprised you?

What inspired you?

What touched your heart?

Write that in your journal and make notes about how to incorporate the messages you want to convey about preventing gun violence into your sketch.

Session #3: Discussion of Effects of Gun Violence/Students Draw and Paint on Canvas

Setting the Stage: 10 minutes

Review what we did last session and what we are going to do today. Hang 15 more panels on a clothesline and ask youth to stand by a panel that speaks to them and ask: What message is being conveyed? How does this panel make you feel?

Engaging with the Project: 20 minutes

Ask: Do guns make you feel more safe or more vulnerable? Has anyone you know been able to prevent gun violence? How did they do it?

Delving Deeper: 50 minutes

Students work on panels with fabric paints, stencils, etc. Vision Quilt staff works 1:1 with youth. If possible, play music related to creating cultural change while students are working on panels. Music will be chosen by staff.

Reflection: 10 minutes

Acknowledge their work, cooperation and creativity and thank them for their support.

Ask students to write in journals and discuss:

Do you believe in the power of art to make changes?

This is a national movement. Where would you like to see the Vision Quilt exhibited in your community?
Where would you like it to be exhibited in the United States?

What message do you want your panel to say to the whole country?

What did you like best about tonight? What could we do better next time?

After this session, the guidance clinic will be invited to provide support as a safety net for youth that may experience a high level of emotion.

Session #4: Complete Panels and Write Artist Statements about their Panel

Setting the Stage: 5 Minutes

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

Point to empty clothesline. Tell youth that the focus of today is to finish their panels and that their panels will be hanging on that clothesline as they finish. Ask each participant to report on progress to a staff member and get materials they need to finish the panels. Tell them they need to be focused to finish and ask them to continue their cooperation and support for this project.

Discuss the importance of people telling their stories. Explain that one member of Vision Quilt staff will work one on one with each youth to write down an artist statement about his panel. Explain that in the future, their Vision Quilt panels will be exhibited with their artist statements when possible.

Engaging with the Project: 50 minutes

Ask youth to complete their panels. Circulate and assist one to one as needed.

Delving Deeper: 20 minutes

Ask students to write a statement about their panel OR dictate a statement to a Vision Quilt staff member to write down. Remind them that this statement will be part of the project and will someday be exhibited along with their panel.

Reflection: 30 minutes

Chief Parole Officer and one Vision Quilt staff will ask each youth to present their panel to the group and ask: What are the saying in your panel? How does it make you feel?

Acknowledge student.

If time, ask students to write in their journals: What is one thing you would be willing to do to prevent gun violence?

Give the students and staff the present of Kim Stafford's poem, "Proclamation to Peace", which has become the anthem of our project. Tell them it was set with metal type and letterpress printed on an antique printing press. Ask for volunteers to read one line aloud until the whole poem is read.

Call up each student, shake their hand and present them with a Vision Quilt Certificate of Participation.

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Tell them this will go in their court record for the judge to see.

Ask out loud: What did you like best about our work together? What could we do better next time we work with youth?

Pass out evaluations to students. Tell them they do not have to put their names on the evaluations.

Acknowledge the teens for their cooperation, creativity and willingness to discuss how to prevent gun violence. Ask them to help clean up the art materials.