

Art Auction

Purpose:

The primary purpose of this project was to expand students' artistic skills and their appreciation of different artistic styles. Combining this with an economic approach brought a new level of enthusiasm and practicality to the project. Knowing their art might be saleable provides a strong incentive for my students to stay focused. An awareness of resource allocation helped produce the best art projects possible. It also provided a framework for students to be wise in their philanthropic giving.

Vocabulary:

Capital resources, choice, consequence, consumer, cost, goods, human resources, incentives, philanthropy, producer, profit, resource allocation, scarcity, trade

Project:

The class creates their own art projects to be sold in auction to family and friends. At least some part of the profit generated will be designated for community service or philanthropic purposes.

Process:

I began this project by selecting a variety of different art media and styles. It was my goal to stretch myself and my students to engage in a wide variety of art projects. I then purchased the tools and materials that we would need. I spent quite a bit of money since our school did not have many art supplies.

I mapped out a schedule so that by mid-December each student would have a variety of art projects to choose from.

This year I had the luxury of having a classroom volunteer who took small groups of children into an empty classroom to do the projects after I had done an all-class lesson on technique. In this way, I was able to teach the rest of the curriculum while small groups of children were filtered in and out of the class.

This project can be varied according to the preferences/talents of the teacher or of the class. Variables could include the number of projects per child, the materials used, the artists studied.

I began to realize that the students were excited about this project and produced quite a number of good quality art. I therefore contacted a family friend who is a professional auctioneer. He volunteered his services for free. I preferred to use an auction format rather than set prices because I was hesitant to set a price that family members were unable to pay. Alternatives to using a professional auctioneer might be to send home a price list ahead of time so parents could save towards the art, to have multiple price points so a family could afford at least some items, or to conduct a silent auction.

Two weeks before the auction we talked about advertising and invitations. I sent invitations home with the students and I also sent them to various community members who support our school or volunteer in our class.

A week ahead of time I selected two products from each student and labeled them with the child's classroom number. These items were displayed in the auction room. All of the extra art projects were hung out in the hallway grouped under the artist's name.

The morning of the auction I practiced with my students – they sat in a long line in front in numerical order. We practiced with them standing beside the auctioneer and holding up their art while the auctioneer began the bidding. Students were instructed to present their art to the highest bidder and thank them for purchasing it.

While our guests were arriving at the auction, each of my class members had one of four jobs to perform as hosts of the affair – greeters, tour guides, cookie table attendants, and punch table attendants. All of these jobs were practiced the day before. We had several new people attend this event and they were very impressed with how our students rose to the occasion with their enthusiasm and responsibility.

After the auction, I made the announcement that all of the art items in the hallway were available for donation and we dismissed the parents first – so that each parent was able to take some of their child's artwork home.

We were very surprised with the enthusiastic support – We raised about \$1,300.

In the early stages of this project, the class as a whole discussed what we would like to do with any profit we made from the auction. We decided to help two local non-profit organizations. They gave us a list of what they needed and my class broke up into small groups to go shopping for them. It was fun to see how all of our class discussions come out in the choices that they made and how they applied what they had learned. Each group had to decide what business to shop for and how their group was going to spend their allotted money. One group decided to buy a clock. They carefully considered the type of clock they wanted and the price they were willing to pay. There were some great discussions about recognizing that if they spent too much on the clock, they would not have enough money left for other items.

After about two hours we came back to class and had a show and tell about what we purchased and how we decided on the items.

This was a very powerful project. It took place two years ago and people are still talking about it.

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