Collage, Printmaking, and School Violence

1. Introduction/Overview
Printmakers such as Jose Guadalupe Posada and Elizabeth Catlett have traditionally used the media of printmaking to promote social justice in the face of oppression. Through our partnership with Mikva Challenge Issues to Action, art students brainstormed about community needs and root causes, and chose the issue of School Violence. We balanced art and action in response to this community need.

2. Goals
Students will determine the needs most prevalent in the their community. Issues can include: violence, incarceration policies, HIV/Aids, police brutality, gangs, drugs, tolerance and diversity issues, education funding disparity, homelessness….. Once an issue has been determined, students can identify root causes, from root causes students can think about corresponding solutions, and after determining potential solutions, students can determine the focus and intention of their print. (for more complete curriculum guidelines, visit http://www.mikvachallenge.org/)

3. Procedure/Sequence
- Brainstorm with students a list of issues in the community.
- Prioritize list, and determine top 2 or 3 issues. Hold a debate to determine the issue the class will focus on.
- Determine root causes of issue, and create list with class. Next, determine corresponding solutions. We chose School Violence:
  - Root Causes
  - Starts at Home
  - Don’t know how to solve conflicts
  - Problems at Home
  - Needs Power and Attention
  - Lost someone important, don’t care
  - Fighting with family or friends
- Solutions
  - Counseling
  - Conflict Resolutions skills
  - “Play for Peace”
  - Extra Curricular Activities
  - Grief Counseling
  - Anger management

- Students create a collage about their root cause and/or solutions. I require students to free write a full page of why their chosen root cause means something to them. I often reminded students to return to their root causes and their writing about a personal connection, and to make the collage about what they have written. This can be challenging. For instance, my class chose the issue of school violence as our class issue. At first, everyone wanted their collage to be about students fighting. I reminded them that the purpose of their collage was to find a visual representation of WHY this problem existed. Images of fighting only perpetuated stereotypes about the inner city, rather than illuminating the root causes of the problem. This objective was clearly written on the board as reference.
  - Collage resources: We took digital photographs of the West Side near the school, as well as inside the school. These images were photocopied so that actual neighborhood and school pictures could be used as background
for the collages. Please visit our website: http://exceljourneys.com/collage.html for examples.

- Once a collage passed muster, it was taped with a piece of carbon paper to the print block and traced. I worked with a size 6 x 9” linoleum print block.
- Safety procedures, texture techniques, and positive/negative outcomes of carving were reviewed. Student were reminded that the print was a mirror image, and all text had to be written backwards.

Variations and enhancements can include:
- Artist statements that accompany prints
- Selling prints as a fundraiser for a cause
- Community interviews (written, video, recorded) about issue that accompany print exhibit
- Creating a website that publishes the prints and artist statements.
  - Poetry/rap and performances with print exhibit

4. Resources

Community Partners
Public Action for Change Today: http://www.chicagopact.org/
“PACT’s principles and activities are one and the same: relationship, action, and evaluation. We aim to unite young people for successful public action and continued learning and development”.
Mikva Challenge: http://www.mikvachallenge.org/
Website offers pdf. files of curriculum about student voice, root causes, and creating relative solutions.

http://www.howard.edu/library/Art@Howard/HUCollection/Catlett11.htm

Books
Readings from “Civically Engaged Reader” that address chosen issue
Viva Posada! A Salute to the Great Printmaker of the Mexican Revolution
by Carlos Cortez
Elizabeth Catlett: In the Image of the People by Melanie Anne Herzog

5. Addendum
Service Goals
- Raise awareness of Root Causes, Solutions, and Community Resources.
- Create Art that visually expresses Problems and Solutions
- Determine actions that class believes addresses solutions to root causes;

Cross Curricular Connections
Writing Reading
Social Studies Art
Standards
ISBE: 26B1. Construct a plan for a work of art based on gathering information, making adjustments, evaluating the image in terms of criteria, and correlating intent and solution.
College Readiness: Identify clear relationships between people, ideas, and so on in uncomplicated passages (Reading 20-23)

Hours Recommended
Art: Create a rubric that determines criteria for print design and overall involvement with the project. Example: Instead of points, allow 6, 5, and 4 hours to reflect levels of proficiency and participation.

Additional Service Opportunities. Students chose to become a part of Challenge Teams and undergo training with “Play for Peace.” They earn hours for time spent with Freshman Divisions teaching collaboration and team building games. Students will have Service Learning Opportunities through several of the Extra Curricular Clubs such as Challenge Team, Peer Mediation, Blocks Together, and Between Friends Leadership Club.