

Music and Art Are Healing: Neurographic Art in the Classroom

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Abstract

In this unit, students will be asked to create two pieces of neurographic artwork that are inspired by music that brings them both peace, joy and happiness and also on the flip side music that presents a nostalgic feeling of sadness. The students will learn about how music affects the brain, a brief local history of music in our own city of Philadelphia, how music and art can be healing, and evaluate the type of music they are listening to as lyrics and words can affect our feelings and perceptions. After completing the two neurographic pieces, students will have the opportunity to reflect on their work and compare and contrast the two drawings. Students will also learn the difference between abstract and representational art, as they will be letting go to create an abstract work of art.

Keywords

Neurographic art, music, healing, neuro art, meditative doodling, art, brain breaks, The Sound of Philadelphia

Unit Content

Introduction / Problem

According to Niche.com, Central High School is one of the most diverse high schools in the United States, with 100% of students qualifying for free lunch and representing a wide range of social emotional needs and cultures. At Central, I teach Intro to Art 1 to a portion of 9th graders and Advanced Art 2 as an elective for upperclassmen. Central High School is a public magnet high school in the School District of Philadelphia and we serve the top academic students in the city with rigorous college prep level work. With that being said, a lot of my students have voiced to me that they feel art class is a break in their day and that they feel a sense of relief in class. Their schedules are extremely hard and art has been a way for them to escape. Recently, I have started playing music in my class without any announcement. Sometimes it is lofi beats and instrumentals, and other times it is my Spotify playlist that has a lot of throwbacks and feelings of nostalgia for my students. After a few weeks of collecting data via my own observation notes and asking students to fill out a survey, I have been noticing how music and art class makes them feel. Here are a few of the questions I asked my students and one of their responses:

Think about your own mental and emotional health. How does listening to music make you feel? How does making art / being creative make you feel?

“I think music kind of saved me, art a little bit less so because i don't consider myself to be very creative. Music feels like a break from reality, getting to have songs that were exactly what i felt like made me feel understood and being able to play songs i love on guitar feels like a really good outlet. Even just music communities have helped me, i have made some of my best friends through music and i think that is pretty awesome.”

How does Ms. Aubry playing music affect the vibe of the classroom studio work space or how you feel in class?

“i think it brings a sense of unity if that makes any sense, i like how it feels knowing we are all listening to the same things while creating”

How is art class going for you? What do you like / dislike? How are you feeling about the current project and what can be improved on Ms. Aubry's end or what is Ms. Aubry doing well? (FYI - I take this data to improve my teaching practice and reflect on how I can be the best teacher for you, so I value your opinions, both great feedback and constructive criticism!)

“I really like the feeling of a break every day. Its really nice to just sit down and create for a while without having to deal with other people or strict deadlines. I also struggle a lot with figuring out what to create, so its really nice to have an assignment to follow.”

Think about your own mental and emotional health. How does listening to music make you feel? How does making art / being creative make you feel?

“Music helps me cope with my mental health as I listen to Melanie Martinez and NF who also experienced the same knowing how they convey that through music. It also helps me calm my anger and sadness when needed, as for art wise it doesn't really do much as I only draw as a hobby and not necessarily a coping mechanism.”

This is just a sampling of some of the data I have started to collect. With this data, I have decided to do a neurographic art project with my Intro to Art 1 students and make it a curriculum that I share with the School District of Philadelphia of an activity that teachers can use as a way to de-stress their students. According to the Vancouver Visual Arts Foundation, neurographic art is a technique that is similar to doodling where students create freeform lines that are coined “neuro lines”. After completing the doodle, creators are encouraged to look at their art and understand the connection between the

conscious and unconscious (VVAf). For this project, my students will be creating two drawings on two pieces of paper. On the first paper, students will write on the back something that is stressful to them or currently stressing them out at that moment. They will then flip over the paper and grab a pencil, sharpie, marker, or any writing utensil that is available. While thinking about nothing but that stress or trauma for a solid 1:00 minute, my students will allow their brain to talk to their hand and see what kind of scribbles their hand draws and what this abstract art starts to look like. Students will then move on to the 2nd piece of paper. I will then ask my students to think about a song, music, sound, etc that moves them and listen to it. When I say moves them, I will say music that makes you feel happy, in deep thought, relaxes you, or a sound that brings you to a time and place, as in activating a memory. As they are listening to their music of choice, they will do the same activity where they draw lines and allow the drawing utensil to flow across the paper. When the music ends, they will stop drawing and be able to reflect on the similarities and differences between their two drawings. I will provide the students with a reflection space on the assignment. Since it is an art project and I will need to include the standards of visual arts education, I will have my students work on thickening of the lines and adding some color and pattern that they think will go well with their design or speak to their emotion that they were feeling. My hope with this project is that students have a time to work with their conscience in an art form that can be healing.

As a resident and teacher of Philadelphia, I understand the constant threat of gun violence and poverty that my students face. At times, the violence has made me question if I can even stay living in this city I love. A big topic of discussion amongst my students, colleagues, and families in Philadelphia is centered around the gun violence epidemic that Philadelphia is facing. More than 90% of the victims are black males and in the last decade, the city of Philadelphia has lost over 30,000 black residents (Macdonald). At times, it can be incredibly hard to continue teaching art to teenagers in Philadelphia without this looming thought of what is happening outside of the walls of my classroom and how I can make a positive impact and change on my students to shift the narrative in

Philadelphia. In our class cohort, we have been discussing how trauma affects the brain and what it looks like for our students. On the contrary, we are also discussing how music can be healing. I know that art has saved my life and I am constantly listening to music when I am creating. There are songs that spark joy in my soul and songs that make me breakdown in tears. In addition, there is so much rich musical history in Philadelphia and I want to make sure to also explore that with my students and introduce them to music that can be used for healing. On the contrary, I also want to expose my students to the consequences of listening to music, lyrics or media that is violent, aggressive, racist, etc and how it affects their brain.

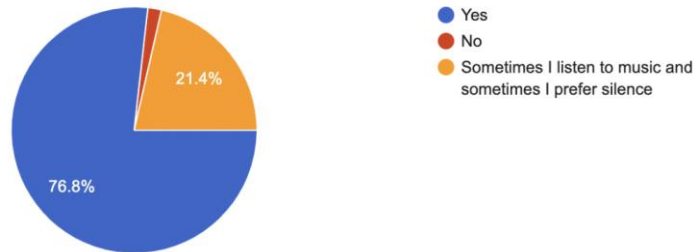
The Knowledge Gained

In my classroom, I started to curate playlists on both Spotify and Youtube that I would play in my classroom either during independent work time or during transition time (as students enter or exit the art room when the bell rings). If I was using the music during transition time, I would indicate to the students that when the music stops, that means it was time to finish up your daily sketch, put your pencils down and focus your attention on me so I could go over our agenda for class for that day or do a demonstration of a medium or follow up on some art history and culture. I find incorporating music into my transitions was a very natural and easy activity for students to follow and it would just immediately click in their brain, “Ok the music stopped, time to pay attention to Ms. Aubry”. A few observations I made prior to playing music is that when high school students transition between class periods and walk in the hall, they have airpods glued in their ears. They are using music as their own transition to go from class to class, and I believe that is why I have felt such strong success with my transitional music in class. In our Music and Healing class through TIP, all of the cohort agreed that we had similar observations with students. I decided to take these observations into action and ask my students how they use music for different purposes and situations.

Do you listen to music when you create art, are being creative or when you study / relax?

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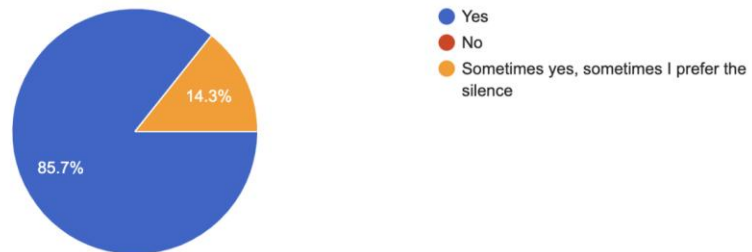
56 responses

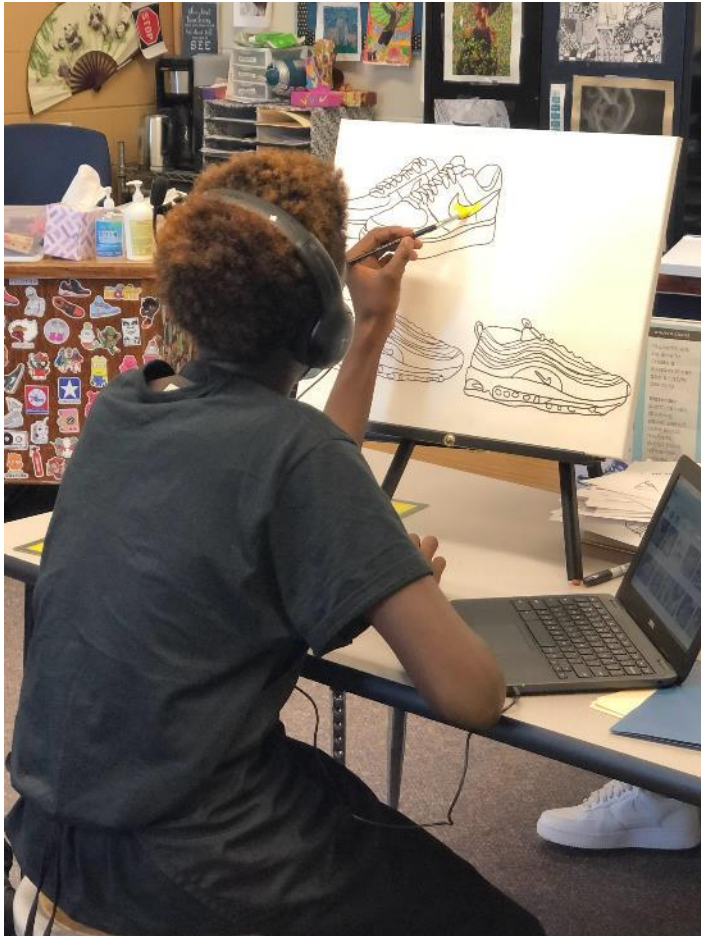


Do you like when Ms. Aubry plays music in class on the speaker during work time?

 Copy

56 responses





Above, I have two screenshots of a summary of 2 cohorts of students' responses when I asked them about music. The first question I asked was if students listened to music when they are creating / being creative, studying or relaxing and the data showed me that the majority of my students do in fact incorporate music. I also asked my students if they sometimes prefer silence, which some of them told me that it really depends on the activity they are doing and the type of focus they need. I told my students that I can fully relate, as right now I am typing this paper while listening to instrumental / lofi beats, but the day before I really needed to zone in and decided to sit in silence while organizing this paper. In the second poll, I asked my students if they liked when I was playing music in class, and 85% of the class said yes. Another chunk of the class said they like feeling

like they have authority in the classroom and enjoy when I poll them on what the majority of the class wants, whether that dictates the genre I choose or if we have a silent day. In the third image, you can see a student in my classroom painting on canvas with his headphones on, plugged into his Chromebook and creating away. I remember walking around my classroom that day and noticing all of my students on task, the room was quiet and they were all tuned into their own music and painting away. Although I was enjoying the experience and the classroom community I created, I was curious about how I could play music on a speaker for the entire class so that everyone could be digesting the same music at once. One of my students told me that he liked when I did the classroom playlist because he felt he was learning about his peers when he noticed who recognized an old throwback song and who got excited by different sounds. It was an easy way for a teenager to create a conversation based on an observation of music during a time when [post pandemic] I feel students struggle socially. Now, I want to move on to choosing appropriate music for your class and how music affects the brain.

One thing I want to note is that the music I play is not only considered non-explicit and/or “clean” but that it is also not the “clean version” of some of our students' contemporary and current music tastes. The music I play is music that I know has lyrics that are not misogynistic, homophobic / transphobic, racist, violent, etc. Your students can tell you to put on the clean version of the latest Lil Durk, Cardi B or Bad Bunny song, but you have to ask yourself - is this really clean? What is the message being said here? Are my students processing this message and what effect is this having on their brain? According to scientific studies and research, exposure to media violence increases aggressive behavior both short term and long term. In theory, this means that the lyrics or media depiction can affect our students' cognition routes and their emotional state, and potentially lead them to make a behavioral decision that is a result of this increase in aggressive thoughts via the music they listen to (Anderson). On the contrary, listening to and having exposure to prosocial songs increased prosocial thoughts, feelings of empathy, and more helpful and positive behavior (Greitemeyer). In the same article, Greitemeyer indicated that researchers have found that listening to rap (that is violent)

and heavy metal could indicate deviances in an individual such as psychoticism and a higher level of tolerance for sexual and racial discrimination, drug use, aggression and vandalism (Greitemeyer). In addition, this study indicated that college-age students listen to music on average for more than 4 hours a day (Greitemeyer). In the last few weeks, I have played Bob Marley in my class and in one of my classes, I have a teaching assistant that helps with a student on an IEP / 504 plan. The assistant came up to me and shared with me how he saw Bob Marley play live before he died and how he was so inspired by the messages he was speaking out in his songs. He told me that when I played Bob Marley in class, it brought him back to a time when he was trying to understand what was happening in the world in terms of politics. We both discussed how the Bob Marley song, "Get Up, Stand Up" brought back different feelings of nostalgia for us. I had indicated to this teaching assistant that I have been taking a class at the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia called "Music and Healing" and that I was learning a lot about how music makes us feel. I told him that I am trying to play music for the kids where the lyrics have positive messages or require deep thinking or even just for calmness. He told me he was happy to hear that something was thinking about that and what kids are listening to or the media they are exposed to because he himself had noticed that some music the kids listen to today is just so violent. After this conversation with the teaching assistant and discussions with my colleagues in our TIP cohort, I decided to think about incorporating some of Philadelphia's rich culture with music in my classroom. If you are outside of Philadelphia and reading this lesson plan, I encourage you to take a deep dive into the history of your own community's experience with music. For example, if you live in the Detroit area, I assume you could talk to your students about Motown and if you are from New Orleans, you most definitely will have to mention jazz. In Philadelphia, I am going to focus on The Sounds of Philadelphia, also known as Philly soul.

In 2021, Philadelphia International Records celebrated its 50th anniversary with its founders Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, who in their lifetime have won Grammys and helped bring the sounds of Philadelphia to be enjoyed by the rest of the world (NPR). Kenny Gamble, in an interview with NPR when asked how he would like to be

remembered, stated “I’d like for the music to speak for itself. And it so far has been doing that because - I want them to remember that message in that music and how that music made people feel, because the world is in such a bad shape because people don't know how to get along with one another. And so we wrote songs that would make people feel better, make people see better. And I think that's part of the longevity of our music because it speaks to the soul” (NPR). For me, this was a great starting point of how to engage with my students on how music makes us feel and how it can allow us to process our own feelings, our trauma, and generally what is going on in the world. At first, without any prior knowledge, they hear me play the Sounds of Philadelphia and immediately say things like, “Ms. Aubry, why are you listening to this old head music? My grandparents love this!”. Similar to Bob Marley, one cannot ignore the social commentary in the Sounds of Philadelphia with songs such as “Am I Black for You?” by Billy Paul and the O’Jays “Ship Ahoy” which comments on the African slave trade (Kennygamble.com). Specifically, Kenny Gamble talks about how in their songs they mention “understand what you listen to while you dance” - making sure that people are listening to what is being said while also vibing to the beat and sounds of the music. Today, in 2023, one of the most popular songs is “Rich Flex” by Drake and 21 Savage, staying on the top of the charts and appearing in short videos on Tiktok with it’s catchy lines and beat. I remember listening to the song for the first time and hearing the lyrics by 21 Savage that talked about being a part of a slaughter murder gang and referring to women in derogatory ways and having “opps” and people trying to pull a trigger on him, etc. I remember the first time I heard it was at 7 am and I was on my way to work, and I immediately just turned off the radio because of the bad head space that music put me in. I do not want to think about murder and guns while I am on my way to teach in a Philadelphia school where we are plagued with gun violence and the trauma that has come along with it and affected my students. I remember when I was in high school from 2005-2009, one of the top artists of the time was Eminem. I remember hearing some of his songs that talked about domestic violence, degrading women, and murder and as a teenage girl not understanding why everyone was idolizing this person and his lyrics.

Now that I have completed this course, I truly believe that students need to have a music literacy class similar to how we offer digital literacy classes to help students with accessing information in a world where access is so accessible and AI makes it incredibly hard to tell what is real and what is fake. At the time I was a teenager in high school, I knew that music made me feel uncomfortable, but I did not know why. This is why I think this neurographic art project I will be presenting can and should be used in all classes as a way to briefly talk about music and give students some food for thought on what lyrics they are allowing to penetrate their brains.

Neurographic Art

I stumbled upon Neurographic art on Instagram during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic beginning when I was feeling particularly lonely, isolated and sad. Through my mindless scrolling, I saw an art teacher record a video of neurographic art and talk about its healing benefits. At the time, I was in a creative and artistic slump, I was removed from my art classroom and forced to teach to students on Zoom, and was completely isolated from my friends and family, as I was living alone with my dog in a city 6 hours from my parents. With all of this weighing heavily on me, I decided to try neurographic drawing in my journals and sketchbooks and think about all of the healing it did for me at the time and as an artist, I love to reflect on the differences between the pieces I created at different times of day, at different moods, and at the height of the pandemic versus present day.

Neurographic art is an explorative and healing project that can be used for people of all ages and no artistic ability is required to do this project, meaning you do not have to be a trained art educator to be good at this (Vena). A Russian psychologist by the name of Pavel Piskarev is the inventor behind the term “Neurography or neurographica” in 2014 and he truly believes that is an artistic form that can change the world because using the tools to create neurographic art creates a link between the conscious and unconscious mind (Vena). My students often ask me, “Ms. Aubry, how is this done exactly? How do you know it is meditative or healing?” According to Pavel, neurons, which are brain

cells, are being activated in a way that brings forth both mindfulness and awareness and consequently this can turn stress into calm (Vena). In my artistic opinion, a lot of the neurographic art that I have discovered on the internet does appear to have a very brain cell / neuron / scientific look to it. Neurographica has become a new form of certification that any individual can be trained in and it is considered a groundbreaking method for healing (Byantokhin). Upon my deep internet searches on more about this art, I discovered a person by the name of Anton who created the website neurographic art to work as a certified neurographics coach to help people heal some traumas in their life. In his bio, Anton talks about how he created the neurographics website after getting into an angry altercation with his son and a judge ordered him to create a community service project and/or commitment (Byantokhin). Although I make my students only complete two drawings and we are comparing and contrasting feelings of sadness versus happiness, Anton created 5 drawings, which he called reflections. In Reflection #5, his final reflection, he talked about how being forced to do this made him realize the simple act of sitting and slowing down, moving an art medium over a paper and sort of doodling gave him a calming effect. If we think back to my student I shared above, who stated that they were grateful they had the opportunity to sit down and slow down and focus on drawing abstract art because it helped them, I cannot imagine how many students this could help if more teachers engaged in this type of practice in their classrooms. The culture in the United States in general feels like we always have to be productive, we are all hustlers and things all have to be done at a fast pace and service. Teenagers experience this at a greater deal than we do, as they are the generation that has the quickest access to information with a few clicks of their fingers and are constantly bombarded with sounds of notifications and badges on their iPhones, etc. Imagine if we were all trained on how to slow down, take a break, to journal or to make neurographic art and reflect on the conscious and unconscious of our brains? I will now explain how to explore this in your own classroom.

Teaching Strategies

In my current teaching schedule, I see 9th graders every day for two quarters for 48 minutes and then switch to a new cohort of 9th graders in the final two quarters, so I have that Intro to Art 1 class for approximately 15 weeks of the school year. On the contrary, I teach two sections of Advanced Art 2 and I see those students from the start to the end of the year, every day for 48 minutes. Next year, my schedule will be different as I will be teaching 5th-12th grade and I am unsure what rostered art classes will be on my schedule due to enrollment changes and schedule shifts. I am very intentional with the lessons I plan, the daily sketches and activities I prompt students to do, and the entire structure of my class. I am very much a type of teacher and I include many avenues for students to access my lesson plans, art demos, and overall have a space to review the activities and information I talk about in class. I love having my Art 2 class every day for the entire year, because I feel that I have built meaningful relationships with my students. With that being said, I do think that this neurographic art project is an activity that should be done after you get to know your students and they feel your classroom is a safe environment for them to express themselves and their vulnerabilities. Being that I teach teenagers, they can sniff out a phony from a mile away and they do not trust adults right away. I wait to introduce this unit when I feel we can have the space to talk about trauma, healing, music and art as a way to cope with feelings and things we are dealing with, and even sharing with my students my own experiences with anxiety, depression, and the effects the pandemic had on my own mental health and social anxiety. As an adult, I know I have a wall up and will not just spill the beans of my trauma with any person without feeling safe in their presence and trusting that they are a supporter of me. Students are exactly the same and they will open up to you and find this activity helpful only if the foundation of the relationship is there.

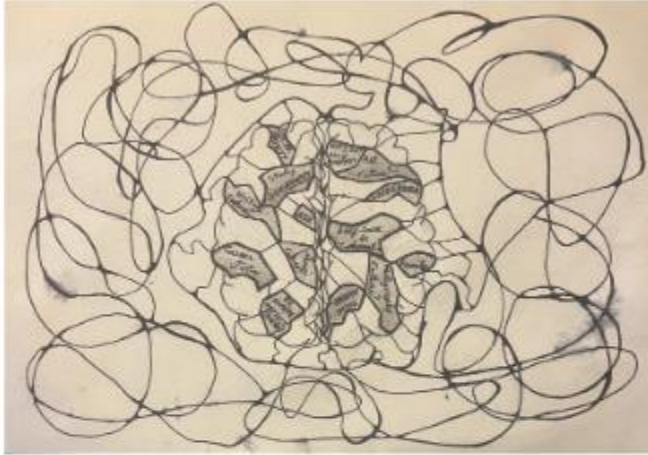
One of the teaching strategies I have incorporated into this unit is doing the project live in front of my students. For example, I will tell my students one of my biggest stressors in life is feeling like I am doing enough as an educator. I then set a timer for 1:00 and think about that stress in my life and start to just let my brain communicate with my hand to draw anything it feels. Sometimes it's jagged lines, sometimes it's squiggles and maybe someday it's a word. After the timer stops, I take a look at my abstract work of art and then decide how I would like to edit it. I ask myself - where should I thicken any lines? Should I add color anywhere? When I think of this stress - what color do I even see? After I edit this stress work of art, I move on to the part that invokes happiness or I listen to a song that brings me to a good place. For this exercise with my students, I decided to listen to the Beyonce "live at the Coachella Homecoming" album. It just makes me so hype and happy. I talk to my students about how I watched the Beyonce Netflix Homecoming documentary and saw all of the blood, sweat and tears she put into creating such a memorable experience. She was the first black musician to headline the popular festival and she did not disappoint. Her lyrics, outfit choices,

choreography paid tribute to HBCUs, the black experience in America, and a historical timeline of her amazing career. I like to mention this to my students as we discuss how The same rules apply for making this work of art... listen to the music and let your art medium flow in any direction and draw whatever you feel is right in your heart. After the song is over, take a look at your work and follow the same routine by editing your work and adding color, lines, pattern, etc to anywhere you see fit. After you are done with your work, be prepared to write a reflection or take a moment to think about how this felt for you. I ask myself (and my students) - did this feel healing? Did it release any stress? What do you notice in the difference between the two works of art? In the graphic below, I am going to show you one of my student's works and their reflection. In order for me to best serve my students and other educators who may use this material for their own classroom and/or students, I wanted to make sure I collected data that I could show as a form of results of doing this activity or what it could look like. The following images I am about to show are going to be examples of the neurographic artwork my students created.

Picture 1: Stress Abstract Art

Your Stress: Mental Illness and My Future (the main part is just my negative thoughts in general; may have to zoom in to see the writ)

Art (Insert here):



Picture 2: Music Abstract Art (Draw to a song that moves you, inspires you, makes you feel a certain emotion: sad, angry, happy, energetic etc)

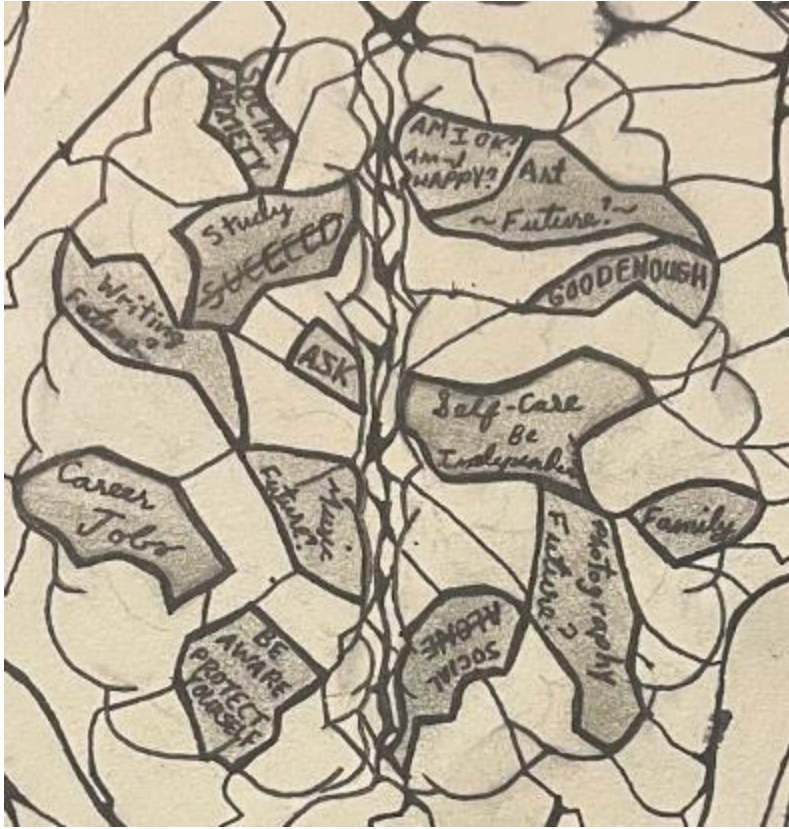
Song Choice: Fear by Seventeen, Album: An Ode

Mood/Emotion: Conflicted (tbh idk what emotion/mood I go into when listening to this but "conflicted" is the closest ig TT)

Art (insert here):



In the image above, I zoomed in and cropped my students' stress art and noticed the student was able to work through a lot of things they were feeling: "Am I ok?" "Social anxiety" "Social / alone" "Be aware, protect yourself" among other things. As someone who creates art to heal, cope with my own anxiety and depression, and sometimes I even journal, I find this student's reflection and works of art so powerful. Below, I am going to share a screenshot of what a student who has experienced extreme trauma wrote to me on Google classroom after turning in his assignment. I am sharing this because I believe it is imperative to create a space for students to discuss how they felt doing this activity and allow dialogue to naturally flow. You may even be able to start a conversation with a student, a counselor, a parent/guardian, etc about any of the findings. From my own observations of teenagers over my last 10 years of teaching, I have noticed that a lot of them cope with stress by endlessly scrolling on social media or have their eyes glued to their phones and seeking answers from those on the internet without seeking information from themselves. This activity allows students to look inward and focus for a few minutes and offer a sense of stress relief and possibly a strategy to put in their tool kit to cope with what is going on in their lives.

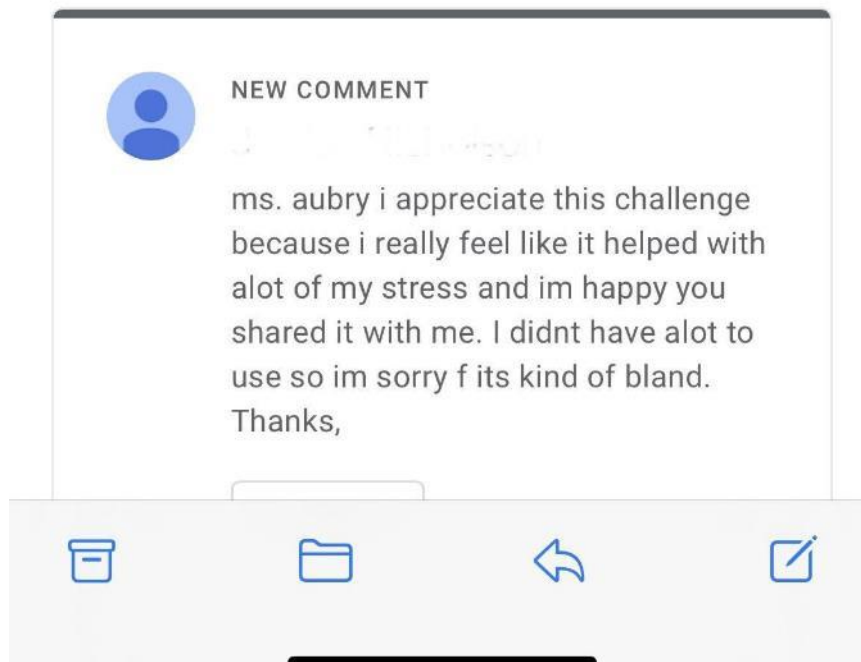




Google Classroom

Hi Allison,

ms. aubry added a private comment on April Sketchbook Challenge - 2 Pieces - Neurographic Art in 4 - AUBRY, A - Intro to Art 8000G.1S-14.



As you review the classroom activities below and the steps on how to complete this project in class, please also take the time to think about these students' responses and what kind of space your own students may need to reflect and heal. Here are some more examples of my student work that you can use as reference when completing this unit in your own classroom.

Picture 1: Stress Abstract Art (Attach picture below)

Your Stress: feeling anxious about anything

Art (Insert here): everything feels so cramped and suffocating



Picture 2: Music Abstract Art (Draw to a song that moves you, inspires you, makes you feel a certain emotion: sad, angry, happy, energetic etc)

Song Choice: flower dance

Mood/Emotion: calm and soothing; happy

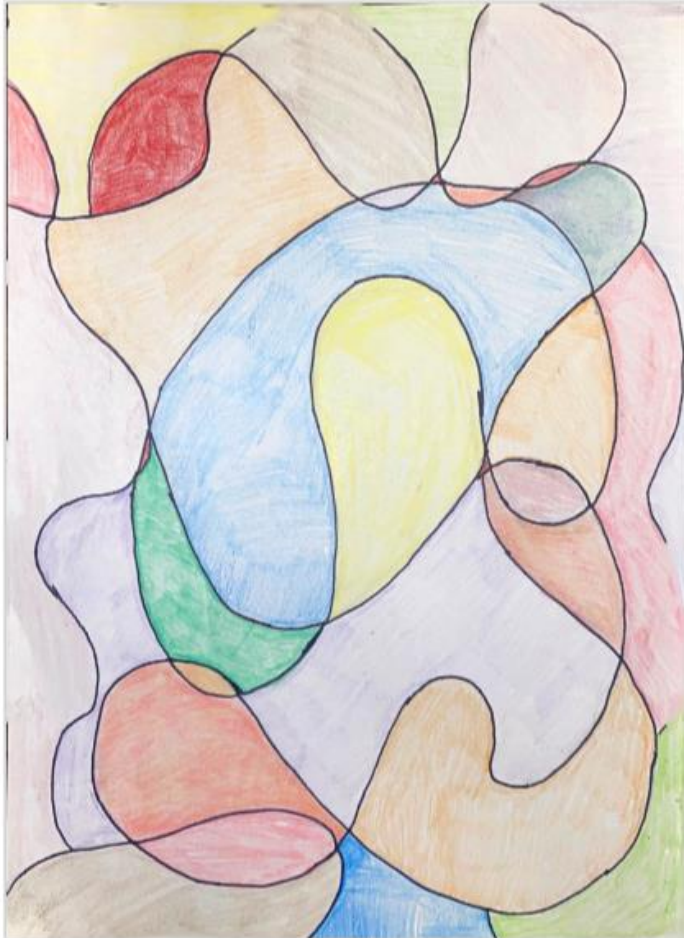
Art (insert here):



Picture 2: Music Abstract Art (Draw to a song that moves you, inspires you, makes you feel a certain emotion: sad, angry, happy, energetic etc)

Song Choice: Sunset Lover by Petit Biscuit

Mood/Emotion: Happy, energetic, and nostalgic.

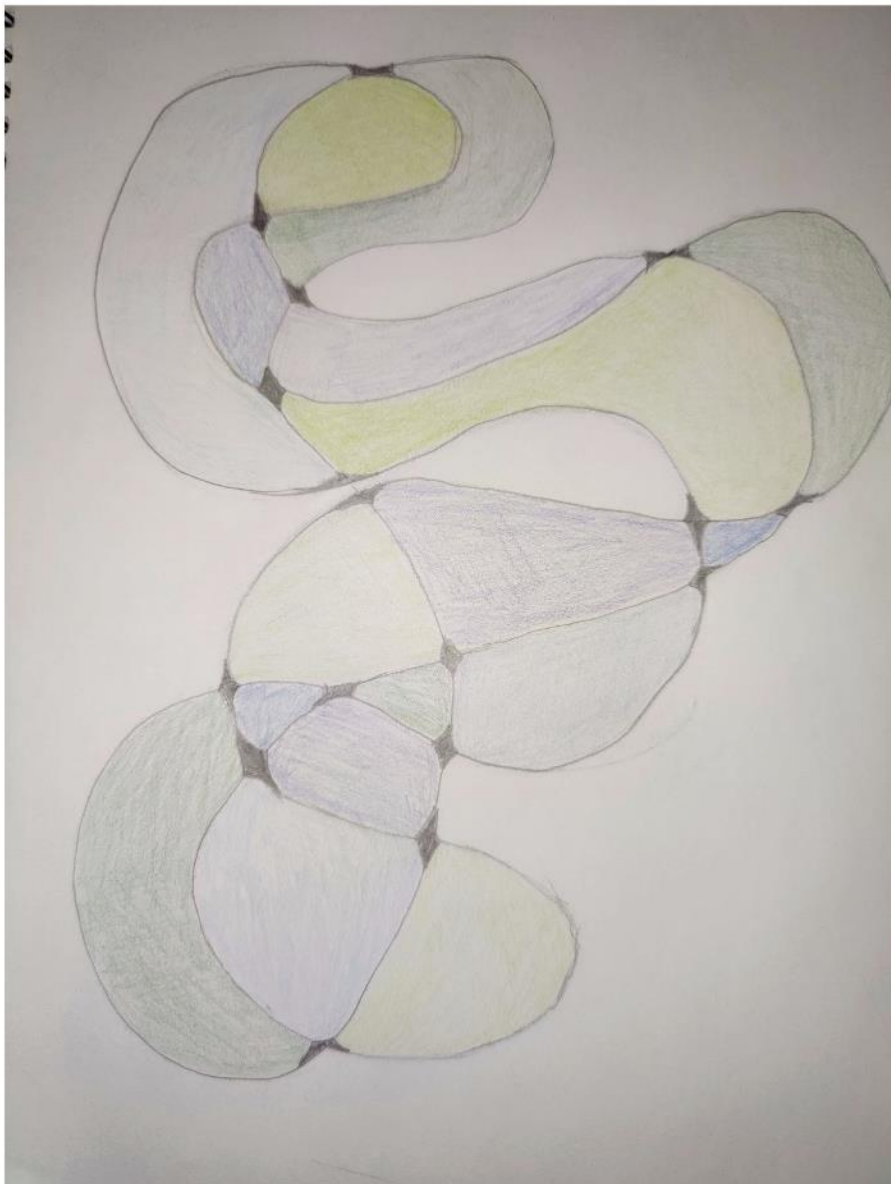


Art (insert here):

Picture 2: Music Abstract Art (Draw to a song that moves you, inspires you, makes you feel a certain emotion: sad, angry, happy, energetic etc)

Song Choice: SLANDER - Love Is Gone (ft. Dylan Matthew)

Mood/Emotion: Sorrow (Because most of the lyrics remind me of my great grandmother who passed away when I was in 4th Grade. That's also why I made most of the colors look pale-ish. The color palette should be blue, light blue, green, light green, and purple)



Your Stress : Too much work, not being able to fit in, overthinking, etc.

Art (Insert here) :



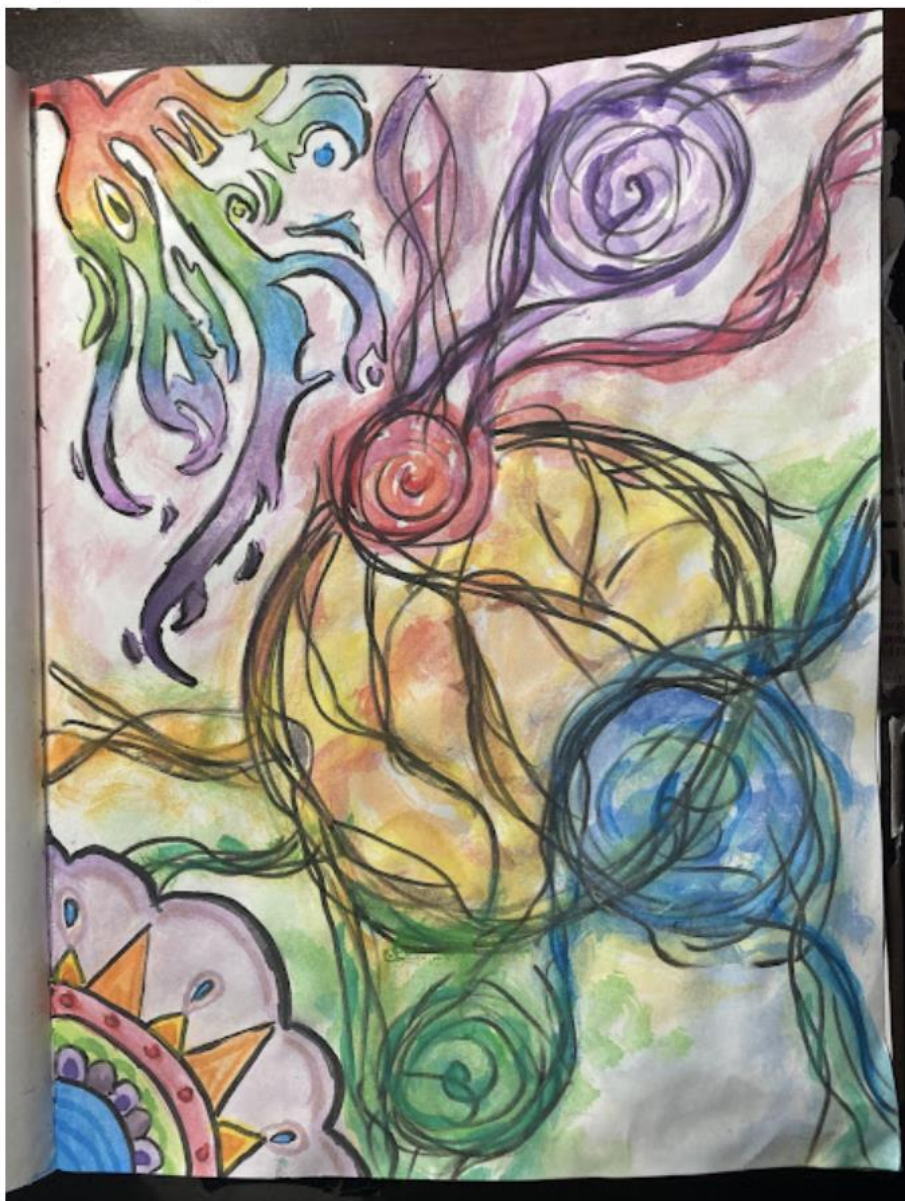
Picture 2 : Music Abstract Art

(Draw to a song that moves you, inspires you, makes you feel a certain emotion: sad, angry, happy, energetic etc)

Song Choice : Eden by Dervikat (Overall, just sons that give me an nostalgic feeling, or a feeling of being in the clouds)

Mood/Emotion : Dreamy

Art (insert here) :



Picture 1: Stress Abstract Art (Attach picture below)

Your Stress: The final tests are coming up and they're supposed to be twice as difficult as the midterms.

Art (Insert here):



Classroom Activities

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to create 2 neurographic drawings -1 that is a drawing reflection of their stress or trauma and 1 will be a drawing that is completed while thinking about happy thoughts or generally a song that moves them, fills them with joy, or brings them to a favorite memory. The drawings can be done in pencil, marker, color pencil, paint, crayons, etc - any art medium and material can be used to complete

this project. Students will be guided on what neurographic art is, what trauma is and what it means to heal, how music is healing, and that this will be a tool that they use to cope. Students will be asked to reflect on what they learned about themselves after the activity is completed.

SWBAT: create 2 neurographic drawings and reflect (writing) on their feelings after they complete the work.

Keywords: neurographic art, neurographica, music, healing, trauma, art, creating, reflection, meditative doodling, healing through art, trauma responsive learning

Materials needed: 2 sheets of paper (any kind, dependent on art medium used), and any art medium to mark make with. For the most part, my students stuck to pencils, color pencils, and markers.

Timeline for completion: This can be finished easily in one class period of 30-60 minutes. It can be stretched out for a long period of time or can be super quick. My students completed it as a homework assignment after I went over some key facts about music, healing, and trauma. We had discussions on why we think art or music are healing. So in total, I would spend 1 day giving background information for better understanding and the students probably need 1 day to complete and 1 day to write a reflection. So let's say a minimum of 1 day to a maximum of 5. This can be used as a singular lesson or a brain break.

District / State / National Standards Met:

Direct Instruction:

Day 1: Introduce students to neurographic art, the history of abstract art and what the difference is between abstract and representational art. I make sure to do this as my students are very concerned with their grades and understanding concepts and abstract art is very hard for teenagers to grasp sometimes. The feeling of letting go and not trying to make a representational image or a drawing from observation can be very hard for teenagers who tend to overthink everything and want to take influence from social media, their friends, pop culture, etc. This really not only is an activity on having a time to

reflect and heal, but also to let go of expectations and let your brain dictate to your hands how to create a work of art that may turn out differently every time you do this activity.

Video 1 (show this to students to introduce a way to relax):

<https://youtu.be/aNXKjGFUIMs>

Video 2 (how music affects the brain): <https://youtu.be/s19Fr-WaXo>

Video 3 (Abstract vs Representational Art): https://youtu.be/lz-Ao_j4dHw

Video 4 (Kid friendly video on talking about trauma): <https://youtu.be/jJ8Hxglh0jQ>

Video 4 (Trauma and music therapy): <https://youtu.be/IWQnTUunhuY> - in this Ted Talk, Karla Hawley shares her experience of how music helped her address and overcome her trauma (childhood abuse). This would be more appropriate for educators to view to understand what music therapy is.

Video 5 (The Healing Powers of Art): <https://youtu.be/XnIrnBnjTmc> - As an art teacher and artist, I see daily how art can be healing and also experience it myself when I am in a creative space - whether it be drawing, painting or even making a visual journal.

Domingo, in this Ted Talk, discusses the healing powers of art as a form of personal therapy. In the beginning of the video, I love how he mentions that he believes the beginning of humanity is when people communicated through art and images on cave paintings.

Homework assignment: For homework, ask students to brainstorm ideas about what they will do in class the following day. For example, if you are spreading this out over multiple days, you can tell students to think about a stress that they are feeling or something that does not bring them joy and it will be the center of our concentration for the next class.

Day 2: Students will come into class with an idea in mind of what stressor in their life they are going to focus on. The teacher will set a timer for 1:00 minute and students will think about a stress they have in their life that they want to focus on in order to heal / create art as a response. The whole class expectation is that everyone is silent and working independently. Alternatively, students can also listen to a song that makes them

feel sad or maybe brings up the type of nostalgia that ignites a place of pain or something that could use some healing and thoughts. As I stated earlier, please make sure that you have established relationships with your students and a classroom environment that is trusting and safe. After students complete their drawings when the time is up, students will then edit their abstract work of art. I say things like - are there any lines that could be thickened? What do you see and how could you edit it? When you close your eyes, do you see a particular color? What patterns have emerged / have you noticed? I am an art teacher so this will address the Elements of Art and Principles of design which is a part of my National Art Standards.

Homework: Remind students that on day 3, they will be thinking of happy thoughts, a happy memory, or music that brings them joy or moves them. We will review what we learned about music and I like to play my “The Sounds Of Philadelphia” playlist and talk to my Philadelphia high school students about musicians that started right in Philadelphia and how they wanted to create a genre of music to bring joy to people and also have a message.

Day 3: Students will repeat the activity that they did yesterday, except now we will either focus on happy thoughts or music that moves us / makes us happy. I like to offer both options because some teenagers are not into music as others are and cannot think of a song under pressure, and due to religious reasons some of my students do not engage with music listening on their own at all. On this day, I set a timer for 5 minutes max as some songs are longer and it can allow students to explore this happy memory in their brains for a bit longer. Students again are encouraged to draw whatever lines come to mind and let their brain dictate the flow of their hands with their medium of choice (pen, pencil, marker, color pencil, etc). After the timer is up, students will look at their work of abstract art and decide again how to edit it. Do they want to thicken up any lines? Do they want to add a particular color or pattern? We will spend the rest of the class working on our drawings as we either continue to listen to music or think of those happy thoughts. During this session, I like to work alongside my students and at this time I will be playing

the Sounds of Philadelphia to encourage good vibrations.

Homework: Be ready to turn and talk to your neighbor via a pair and share to discuss your two neurographic drawings.

Day 4: This is the reflection day. In the School District of Philadelphia, we are encouraged to teach students how to engage in academic conversations or scholarly talk. This means that we want students to be social, but to be discussing what they are learning. To incorporate that into this lesson, I suggest posting some sentence starters for students to use when discussing their artwork, such as:

1. Do you know any differences between your first drawing and your second?
2. How did creating this art make you feel?
3. Could you see this being useful or as a coping mechanism?
4. Why do you think your brain chose to draw certain movements, patterns, designs or colors?

Exit Assessment: Students will be reflecting in their sketchbook, journals or google documents on how this activity made them feel or their reaction to it. For example, one of my students who has experienced extreme gun violence trauma this year thanked me for introducing a calming activity for him that allowed him to destress and have a sense of healing. That was enough of an assessment and reflection for me in my art room, so at this point in the lesson, please do what is best for you and your students.

Vocabulary: neurographic art, neurographica, music and healing, trauma, art and music, journaling, meditative doodling, meditation, visual journals, the sound of Philadelphia

Resources

Annotated Bibliography

“Neurographica Is Healing the Island’s Traumas.” Cyprus Mail (Cyprus) (2022): n. pag. Print.

In 2014, Dr. Pavel Piskarev coined the term “neurographic art” or “neurographica” where he said he was combining art with psychology to heal chronic and acute trauma. In the process of neurographica, Dr. Piskarev says that you are linking your consciousness with the subconscious through creativity to activate the cells of our central nervous system that can inevitably turn stress into calm.

"QUANTIFYING THE BENEFITS OF ARTS EDUCATION." States News Service, 24 Apr. 2017. Gale In Context: Biography, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A490913759/BIC?u=upenn_main&sid=summon&xid=9f210a74. Accessed 20 Feb. 2023.

In Philadelphia, PA, the William Penn Foundation quantified the data that shows that participating in the arts courses can shield young people from the debilitating effects of trauma. Most remarkably, preschool students who had access to dance, music and art classes had lower cortisol levels (cortisol is a level that goes up and down with stress in our bodies) than their counterparts who did not.

byantokhin, Posted, and Posted bycolettekelso. “Neurographic Art.” *Neurographic Art*, 3 Jan. 2021, <https://neurographic.art/>.

Neurographic art was invented in Russia in 2015, proving that it is still relatively new and a method that just few people have began to discover. Dr Pavel Piskarev is the Russian psychologist behind the neurography development. The writer of this websites name is Anton, and he created this website as a community service commitment after he got into an angry altercation with his son. His reflections on

his process in dealing with his trauma and the examples of his work are fantastic and eye opening.

“Founders of the 'the Sound of Philadelphia' on 50 Years of Soul.” *NPR*, NPR, 12 Sept. 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/12/1036475274/founders-of-the-the-sound-of-philadelphia-on-50-years-of-soul>.

NPR sat down with Leon Huff and Kenny Gamble to discuss the 50th anniversary of their record label started in Philadelphia and how the Sounds of Philadelphia affected the world.

Greitemeyer, Tobias. “Effects of Songs With Prosocial Lyrics on Prosocial Behavior: Further Evidence and a Mediating Mechanism.” *Personality & social psychology bulletin : journal of the society for personality and social psychology* 35.11 (2009): 1500–1511. Web.

This author explores all of the research done with music including how prosocial music makes an individual develop more interpersonal empathy and skills as well as prosocial thoughts where on the contrary, violent music can lead to more aggressive behaviors. The author offers opportunities to think about developing this prosocial behavior into a meditative and reflective practice.

Hetland, Lois, et al. *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Arts Education*. Teachers College Press, 2007.

Art education is important and many of us believe that students benefit from a quality arts education, and Lois Hetland and her colleagues dive into explaining exactly why. The language in the book helps art educators explain how what they do is important and in a language and data driven way that is pleasing to policy makers, board members and administrators.

Letton, Robert W. "Zen and the Art of Pediatric Trauma." *The journal of trauma and acute care surgery*. 82.6 (2017): 983–988. Web.

Meditation and the Japanese art of Zen is explored in this journal article and how it relates to healing in terms of pediatric trauma. Surgeons are encouraged to enlighten patients and/or other surgeons to reflect through meditation in order to become a better well-rounded doctor who could take care of the patient and the family.

MacDonald, Tom. "Philly Officials Address Gun Violence Epidemic as Nearly 500 People Are Murdered." *WHYY, WHYY*, 24 Nov. 2021, <https://whyy.org/articles/philly-500-homicides-gun-violence-epidemic>

As a Philadelphia resident and a School District of Philadelphia teacher, I have become hyper-aware of the increase in violence in our city and how it affects my students. This article explains the horrifying numbers of how gun violence is particularly affecting the black community.

Posted by Kenny Gamble · February 25, 2021. "New York Times: 50 Years Later, Gamble and Huff's Philly Sound Stirs the Soul." *Kennygamble*, <https://kennygamble.com/blogs/news/50-years-later-gamble-and-huff-s-philly-sound-stirs-the-soul>.

This is Kenny Gamble's official website that provides an ample amount of resources on the history of the Sounds of Philadelphia and an interview with Leon Huff and Kenny Gamble as they discuss their 50 year history and success.

Sheridan, Kimberly M., et al. *Studio Thinking 3: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts*

Similar to the earlier edition mentioned of *Studio Thinking*, Sheridan talks about the real benefits of art education and gives teachers the tools and the data to back up their work in order to advocate for funding of arts programming.

Swain, Gloria. "The Healing Power of Art in Intergenerational Trauma." *Canadian journal of disability studies*. 8.1 (2019): 15–31. Web.

Gloria Swain writes about the black experience in America in regards to racism, poverty, sexism, and intergenerational trauma. Swain suggests that the historic poor treatment of black people by the medical community and healthcare system has led to the black community also distrusting mental health services and opportunities. Swain offers solutions from a political and activist lens that allows a conversation about her art and what it represents to be discussed.

St. Thomas, Bruce. *Empowering Children through Art and Expression Culturally Sensitive Ways of Healing Trauma and Grief* /. London ; Philadelphia :: Jessica Kingsley Publishers,, 2007. Print.

The author explores how children explore their traumas through play and other creative activities and how it helps them resolve issues and communicate about their needs. The author suggests that having an opportunity for children to participate in the arts creates a safe space for children to express their trauma and allow for a coping mechanism to naturally happen or be addressed. St. Thomas states that his book is especially helpful for those that work with children who are traumatized or who have experienced loss, grief, relocation and other sorts of trauma.

Vancouver, Art. "The Benefits of Neurographic Art." *VVAF*, VVAF, 7 Oct. 2022, <https://www.vanf.com/post/the-benefits-of-neurographic-art#:~:text=Also%20known%20as%20doodling%2C%20neurographic,a%20specific%20algorithm%20or%20method>.

The Vancouver Visual Arts Association lays out the foundation on what neurographic art is and how the doodling process can engage both our aesthetic and emotional intelligence. Neurographic art is considered mindful, meditative, but also allows a space for reflection and real life changes.

Vena, Michael de. "Neurographic Art for Healing." *Create for Healing*, 20 Nov. 2022, <https://createforhealing.com/neurographic-art-for-healing/>.

Vena claims that Dr. Pavel Piskarev, the Russian psychologist behind neurographic art, has created an art form that connects the neurons in your brain cells that activate both awareness and mindfulness. As a result of this, the awareness and mindfulness can turn stress into calm.

Wilson, Celeste. "Neurographic Art." *Medium*, Share Your Creativity, 27 Apr. 2022, <https://medium.com/share-your-creativity/neurographic-art-13ad4b279d92>.

The definition breakdown of neuro graphic art can be thought of as: neuro - means brain and graphic - means image and therefore, it means an image of your brain. The several names associated with neurographic art are: neurographica, neurographics, neurography, neuro drawing, and neuro art. Wilson claims that when we do something creative, our brain feels a reduction in stress and the production of dopamine is encouraged in our brain. Because of this, neuro graphic art is used when working with patients with PTSD and those that suffered trauma.

Appendix

Standards

District: All K-12 students experience quality, sequential arts education with a focus on college and career readiness. All K-8 students receive arts-integrated instruction in support of students reading at grade level.

State (Pennsylvania): **Standard - 9.3.2.F1:** Use critical processes (e.g., compare, contrast) to examine works of art. **Standard - 9.1.M.PK.E1:** Use imagination and creativity to express self through music and dance. **Standard - 9.1.M.PK.J:** Use a variety of technologies for producing or performing works of art. **Standard - 9.1.V.PK.B1:** Combine a variety of materials to create a work of art. **Standard - 9.1.V.1.B1:** Create works of art and identify art materials, techniques, and processes.

National: VA:Cr1.2.2a - Make art or design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions and curiosities. VA: Cr2.1.3a: Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials. VA:Cr2.2.5a: Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment. VA:Cr3.1.5a: Create artist statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices in art-making.