

The Art of Zentangle and Incorporating Mindfulness Meditation in the Classroom

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Spring 2024

Abstract

In this unit, students will be asked to create a Zentangle pattern chart and an abstract work of art made out of watercolor paint, sharpies, and the use of Zentangle patterns. Prior to creating the art work, students will be introduced to meditation and how to practice mindfulness through the art of Zentangle. The students will learn how meditation can have a positive effect on their physical, mental, and emotional well-being and health. Students will also learn how art, specifically Zentangles, can be used to relieve stress and anxiety. After completing the abstract art and Zentangles, students will have the opportunity to reflect on their work and write about how meditation and the art of Zentangle made them feel. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on why mindfulness is so important for their mental health. Lastly, students will learn the difference between abstract and representational art, as they will need to let go of the representational ideals we learned before and completely let go with this free flowing art form.

Keywords

Zentangle, meditative doodling, meditation, Asian mediation, art

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.

Unit Content

Introduction / Problem

According to a report done by US News, Julia R Masterman School (also known simply as Masterman) is the #1 school in Pennsylvania, the #1 school in Philadelphia, the #33 school in the entire USA and the #11 magnet schools in the USA. 100% of students at Masterman are economically disadvantaged and around 60% of the population are minorities (US News). At Masterman, I am 1 of 2 art teachers, serving grades 5th-12th and teaching general elementary and secondary art courses, as well as AP Studio Art. As stated earlier, Masterman is an academic public magnet secondary school within the School District of Philadelphia and I serve the top academic students in the city with rigorous college preparatory level work. All teachers at Masterman have to go through an additional endorsement process, known as being a certified

“demonstration teacher.” This part of the interview process ensures that our academically gifted students are being challenged by teachers who think outside of the box for curriculum that pushes our students beyond their comfort zone and limits. The Advanced Placement (AP) course enrollment at Masterman is 91% of students participating (US News). 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. This is the sentiment not only in my 5th grade elementary art courses, but also my seniors enrolled in AP art.

When I was first hired at Masterman, an administrator made sure to point out to me that Masterman has a “mental health crisis.” A few months into working at Masterman, I would see this play out in real time. From my perspective, I would see students crying over anything less than an A+ in any course, students having mental breakdowns on the amount of work they had and how they were going to juggle all of their extracurricular activities, and then I would have to reprimand students for trying to study for a math test in my art class, reminding them that their brain needed this stress relief and a break of creating art in order to feel calm and successful. In my own classroom, this looked like 14-year-old students coming up to me and asking if I was going to deduct points off of their art project because the tiniest smudge would not erase and our kids try every attempt at perfection in all courses and aspects of their assignments across the board. After experiencing this mental health crisis and perfection chasing with the perspective of their teacher, I knew it was important now more than ever to introduce my students to mindfulness in the art room.

As an artist and art teacher, creating art has always been a therapeutic and mindful activity for myself. For me, I always considered it a form of meditation. It is my favorite part of being an art teacher. I always joke that I have the best job - I get to teach students new mediums and methods of art, and I have a room filled with 33 students creatively problem solving how they want their art to look. Naturally, the art room fosters a positive learning environment and community of students that socialize while creating which strengthens their social emotional learning skills. While the students are creating, I play music in the classroom of curated playlists created by me and I also allow them to listen to their own music with headphones. In 2023, I took another course through the Teachers Institute of Philadelphia (TIP) program on how music

is healing and collected data on how it made my students feel. A sampling of my students' responses are below.

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."

Fast forward to the spring of 2024, I am enrolled in another course at TIP, but this time with Dr. Patel, teaching us about Asian mediation traditions and history. I could not help but see the parallels from the "Music and Healing" course I took last year in conjunction with learning about the healing properties of meditation. My students are already well versed in my passion for how art and music create a healing and therapeutic environment in our art making space. In my personal life, I have practiced meditating every morning with deep breathing exercises and reading a passage from "The Daily Stoic" that sets my mindset for the day. Sometimes, if my mind is racing and feeling like it cannot turn off, I do a sleeping meditation through the Peloton app on my phone and I wake up feeling shocked how quickly that guided meditation puts me right to sleep. On other days, I meditate by creating free flowing abstract art or writing in my journal. All of these things I do are comforting for me and what I see as stress relieving activities. The question I had when joining this course was, "Well.. this is great for me in my personal life, but how do I bring this into my classroom with students?". As Dr. Patel guided us through meditation exercises, focusing on our breath work and clearing our minds, I immediately texted my friends and family after the course like "EVERYONE! PLEASE MEDITATE AND TRY THIS!" because of how good I felt. I relayed this information to one of my administrators, and I sent them questions on their attitude and feelings on meditation in the classroom and incorporating it at Masterman (their responses will be included in a later part of this research). Awaiting their response, I decided to do some research on my own on the art of Zentangle.

Prior to moving to Philadelphia, I was a teacher in Boston, Massachusetts for 7 years. While teaching in Boston, I learned of the phrase and art form of "Zentangle". I remember reading an article that came out on Maria Thomas and Rick Roberts, artists based in central Massachusetts, who came up with "Zentangle" in their studio. Maria and Robert created trademarked patterns, designs and doodles with funny names and step by step guides on how to create them. The phrase "Zentangle" can literally be translated to "Zen= meditative, meditation" and "Tangle=doodles, drawing" (Go Local Worcester). Being that I was an art teacher in Boston, I always incorporated zentangles into my curriculum because it felt really cool and relevant to

share contemporary artists starting a movement right in my students home state. Flash forward 10 years later in 2024, I am currently a student in Dr. Patel's "Asian Meditation Traditions: Past and Present" and I am simply not satisfied with teaching the art form of zentangle without also educating my students on what it actually means to meditate or be in a state of calm consciousness. Dr. Patel wrote in his syllabus that the contemporary world has become very familiar with the terms "meditation" and "mindfulness" but that we are less familiar with the traditions of both the ancient and modern times that inform that contemplative science and practices we see today. According to a US News report, 27% of my students identify as Asian. This added to my drive to not just teach zentangle and meditation without understanding the traditions of the past and present and culturally how this may appear in my students' religions or practices at home. With that being said, the unit I introduced to my students and what I will be outlining in this curriculum, involved both the art and history of Zentangle, but also the traditions (past and present) of meditation. Later in this essay, you will note that I had my students take notes on what they learned and submitted it. The project itself involves my students creating a chart of Zentangle patterns, and then creating an abstract art piece using watercolor paint and sharpies. After the students complete the project, they will be asked to reflect on how meditation and creating Zentangles made them feel. This data will inform me on how to improve my teaching and research on this topic for the next cohort of students, and also speak to the research and data I collected as a part of this curriculum.

Meditation

The first important factor I learned about meditation in Dr. Patel's course is that meditation is a high energy activity, it is not always calm, and may activate difficult feelings. Prior to doing this work with your students, research the definition of Asian meditation and techniques, and find the differences between the definition across various cultures and disciplines. Second, it is important to not abruptly enter or exit the practice of meditation and a routine needs to be built. Before introducing it to my students, I knew it was important to teach my students what meditation is and a bit of its history prior to engaging them in an activity that needs to be built upon a routine and takes practice. Please note prior to engaging in an activity such as meditating with your students, it is important to verify with your administration, parents / family of your students, and any other important stakeholders that you can do this in your school / classroom.

Dr. Patel had stated in class, “When the mind is settled, one has unbounded consciousness. If we are not practicing meditation, could we be clouded by the chaos of our thoughts that make us forget who we really are?” Meditation can possibly trigger trauma or upsetting feelings with individuals. I know from my own experience that sometimes sitting with my eyes closed and trying to concentrate has occasionally led me down a dark path in my brain. Interviewing and educating my administration and families was crucial to me before conducting this lesson. Prior to engaging my students in a lesson on meditation, I wanted to collect some data from one of my administrators on their perspective on meditation and our students mental health status and if they saw any correlation.

1. How would you describe the mental health status of our students at Masterman?

It depends on the student... but a certain part of our student body - for whatever reasons - workload, post-pandemic stressors, family, etc - would be in what I call Mental Health Distress. I think this is close to 20%. Then there is another 40-50% who have wavering mental health issues due to the same reasons. But they are more the "ebb and flow" type, for whom there are bad stretches followed by good. But we have A LOT of work to do in this building, to better meet the mental health needs of these kids, and much of what we are trying to deal with in this area is "uncharted waters."

2. What do you know about meditation? Do you think meditation would help our students?

Very little... and yes, I think anything that teaches them to relax, be present in the moment, and be mindful... would be helpful.

3. How do our students currently cope with stress, anxiety, depression, and their mental health in general?

Many don't; many have regular therapists, and many are in between. There is also a lot of self-medication, which means drug use and tobacco and other unhealthy habits.

4. As an administrator, do you see mental health affecting students' behavior and the choices that they make?

For sure. I see kids hiding in the bathroom for two and three periods at a time. Skipping school to avoid a bad grade... seeing their grade drop more because they skipped, and then it getting worse. We have kids who "wash out" of healthy activities like sports and clubs because they are so stressed. That is never good. Then there is of course the archetypal "Masterman workaholic" - who appears healthy because they are on top of all their stuff here and "thriving" but at what cost? Being a teenagers is supposed to be fun sometimes. And I just don't see that in some kids.

After gathering this information from an administrator at my school, I felt it was important more than ever to engage my students in meditation practice as early as 5th grade. As their art teacher, I have the benefits of teaching students at Masterman from grades 5th-12th. This upcoming school, 2024-2025, I will be a junior seminar teacher and a junior class advisor. In my opinion, the junior year (11th grade) of high school is the most stressful and important for our students. They are starting to look into their careers and future outside of the classroom and taking SATS, loading up on AP and honors courses, and going on college tours at the nations most competitive schools and universities. In our schedule next year, we will have the first 15 minutes of school with our advisory to set them up for success for the day. I contemplated what this could look like if I implemented meditation practices with them and informed them of what I learned at the University of Pennsylvania, through Dr. Patel and the readings and research provided. As an artist myself, I know the ways in which my mind goes into a free flowing state when I am creating art. Art to me has always been therapy, and without having any context before this course, a form of meditation for myself. I express my thoughts through the strokes of a paintbrush, or the way I carve symbolism into a block of linoleum, or the way I use my hands to sculpt various items out of clay. Lately, I have been taking a wheel throwing ceramic class, where I had to concentrate for 3 hours on centering clay onto a spinning wheel and molding it into a vessel of some sort, whether that be a bowl or cup. During that time, my mind felt empty and endless, with my focus solely being on the way my hands gripped the wet clay on the ceramic wheel and the motions in which I had to pull, push, and mold to get the desired outcome

of the vessel I had in my mind. How could I mimic this mindful meditation practice in my art room? According to PTSD UK, “Zentangle is a form of art meditation which is used to relax the mind by falling into a state of ‘flow’ by drawing repetitive patterns, and having no end goal in mind while you draw” (Zentangle Meditation for PTSD).

According to an exploratory trial conducted by Shirley Man-Man Sit at the School of Public Health at the University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China, mindfulness or meditation based art therapy has scientifically and factually proven to improve psychological well-being (Sit, SM). The exploratory trial conducted at the University of Hong Kong focused on mindfulness-based Zentangle art workshops in family social services, specifically during COVID-19. Within the abstract of the study, it was stated that the majority of participants felt an increase in knowledge, confidence, and most importantly, towards managing stress and how to strengthen their own family relationships (Sit, SM). Although not a scientific study in my own classroom, I also observed my students gain confidence in their art making as they created the Zentangle doodles, as well as joy in their faces as they shared with each other their work and how they interpreted the different patterns. We found our own little “Bob Ross” moment and allowed the “happy little accidents” of our misstep of a pattern to be turned into something new.

Zentangles

So, what is Zentangle, exactly? As an art teacher who started her career in Massachusetts, I have always known it is a creative doodling art form that had trademarked patterns and designs that were invented in the very state I was teaching in, created by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas. According to Roberts and Thomas’ website, the “Zentangle Method” is a relaxing and easy to learn art form that involves creating striking images by drawing structured patterns, which they like to refer to as tangle (Zentangle.com). The way I introduced it to my students was to say that we are creating non-representational, abstract art. Prior to this project, I had the students do representational and realistic drawings where that freedom did not exist. This abstract lesson contradicted nicely with what they just learned and pivoted easily into each other. Similarly to how I told my students to not focus on the outcome of the work or striving for perfection of the specific pattern, Zentangle.com suggests that you should keep your hand in a relaxed position and be delighted by the surprises as you rotate your tile paper around and attempt to follow the

steps of the pattern. Admittedly, some of the patterns are very hard to follow for my group of 10 year olds, who I was practicing this lesson with, but they had incredibly fun names. When my students started to draw the Zentangle pattern of “Lava Juice” and they felt the fear of messing up, I simply told them to close their eyes and whatever their mind showed them that the steps should be for drawing “Lava Juice” is the steps they should follow. I said there are no rules, just guidelines, let your mind flow freely as it directs you and how to draw what you are envisioning. If you were to order an official Zentangle drawing kit from Roberts and Thomas’ website, Zentangle.com, you would see that they state that they include no eraser in their kits. According to the artists and creative team on Zentangle.com, “Instead of looking at them as mistakes, we reframe them as ‘opportunities’” in reference to using a pen and not erasing and they added, “By avoiding common blocks to creative flow such as: self-criticism, fear of failure, lack of immediate positive feedback, worrying about outcomes, frustration with length training, lack of inspiration and doubts about what to do next, you can create beautiful art right away” (Zentangle.com). As an artist and an art teacher, my heart exploded at this explanation as to what makes Zentangles special, and why this free-flowing art making activity is great for our kids' mental health and ability to restructure their cognitive thinking. For example, as stated earlier, I work in an academic magnet school, which is rated #4 in the entire country (US News). This means my students are perfectionists in every subject, following every rule of curricula and seeking a 100% and beyond in everything that they do. How many students have been told to believe that they cannot draw and turn into adults who say to me, “Oh, you are an art teacher? The best I can do is stick figures!” It was Pablo Picasso that once said, “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up”. In terms of mental health, scientific research has backed up my own thoughts as an artist and art teacher that everyone should be incorporating some sort of mindful art activity in their day, even if they have the negative thoughts of what is good art and what is not. According to a preliminary study conducted in 2021 (PTSD UK) with 40 health care workers, it was observed that after few minutes of participating in Zentangles, that the individuals involved in the art making had positive results such as: stress relief, a decrease in workplace stress and frustration, and an actual increased commitment to work (PTSD UK). On the contrary, Maria Thomas and Rick Roberts (the founders of Zentangle) admit that although the copyrighted doodling word has the word “zen” in it, they do not teach or emphasize any Zen Buddhism of any religion. Instead, the focus of their Zentangle business is to

emphasize creating art with gratitude and appreciation (Zentangle.com). When you toggle to the “How Does it Work” tab on their website, you will see a bulleted list of the Zentangle method that looks like this:

“The Zentangle Method works because

- It is fun
- It is simple to learn
- Each stroke is easy to draw
- There are no mistakes
- There are no pre planned outcomes, yet
- You always know what to do next
- The result is unexpected and beautiful . . .

. . . and all this occurs with gratitude and appreciation.”

For any educator hoping to use this in their classroom, I could not imagine a better “mantra” to lead with with your students. Zentangle avoids all limitations that one may feel when you mention art, and most importantly, it allows for individuals who feel they are not artistic and at best can do “stick figures” to feel creative juices flowing and innovation that can be taught quickly, such a 30 minute workshop or other relatively short session (Sit, SM)). Lastly, participants of Zentangle can feel proud and their abstract art be a symbol of accomplishment and stepping perhaps outside of their comfort zone and can share their gift and art with others (Sit, SM)). Isn’t that what we could always want for our students? One of my biggest takeaways from doing this unit with my own students is the gratitude I heard from their families, who’s students came rushing home to show them an art form that, “even if you can do it, dad!”. Below, I will outline the teaching strategies and classroom activities to accomplish this.

Teaching Strategies

The following teaching strategies and classroom activities were conducted in an art class with students in 5th grade. In my current schedule, I see 5th graders 2-3 times a week, on an A/B schedule for approximately 45 minute class periods. Aside from this 5th grade class, I am on a

rotating schedule of teaching the entire school, grades 5th-12th. Next year, I will be teaching just 5th and 6th grade art, Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art, and have a homeroom of 11th graders. 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. Please adjust the lesson as you feel appropriate for your classroom, environment, and students. With that being said, I do think that this meditation zentangle 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, meditation 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. Lastly, you could forego the meditation pieces altogether, and just focus on the Zentangle aspects and art room. I have seen many teachers use Zentangles in and outside of an art room space, and just say it is a stress-relieving art activity without much more information.

Classroom Activities

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to create a 4x5 chart (20 squares total, example/picture is below) of Zentangle patterns after learning about what Zentangle is and how to create the patterns, whether that means they are referring to the step by step guide provided on Google classroom or Youtube. Teachers can also print out directions on how to create Zentangles if they prefer handouts / printouts. After the students have successfully practiced with Zentangles in their sketchbook and/or on the handout, they can then move onto the meditative watercolor

aspect of the lesson. For this part of the lesson, students will use watercolor paint without fear, dipping their brush in water, then the water color palette, and allowing the paint to drip and mix on their paper as they rotate it. The point of this activity is to paint without restriction, let your mind meditate and free flow as it guides your hand to move the paintbrush across the watercolor paper. After the paper is dry, students will use sharpie to create Zentangles in the empty spaces that are left. When their artwork is complete, students will reflect in their sketchbooks on how meditation and creating Zentangles made them feel. Students will also reflect on what they learned about themselves through this activity, similar to how people can reflect on how meditation has transformed their lives.

Directions: Copy all of these boxes in your sketchbox with the names. Google on your chromebook [Google or Youtube] the name of the Zentangle and attempt to draw it. For example "Beeline Zentangle Step by Step".

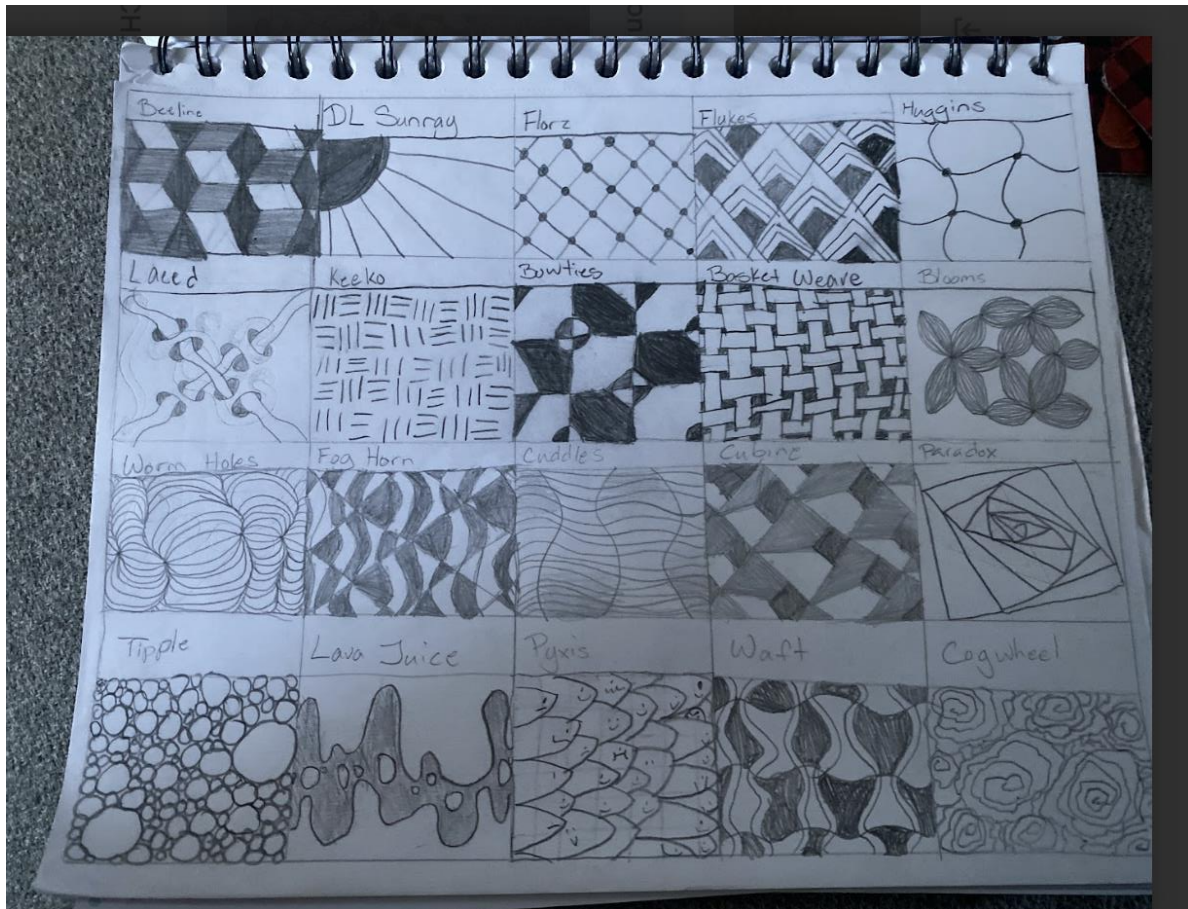
4
Vertical
boxes

Beeline	DL Sunray	Florz	Flukes	Huggins
Laced	Keeko	Bowties	Basket Weave	Blooms
Worm Holes	Fog Horn	Cuddles	Cubine	Paradox
Tipple	Lava Juice	Pyxis	Waft	Cogwheel

5 horizontal boxes

4x5 = 20 boxes total

(Example of Zentangle handout, created by me)



Above: An example of the finished Zentangle practice boxes I had the students do in their sketchbook. They found step by step guides on how to draw the Zentangles by either using Youtube tutorials or finding step by step directions via a Google search. As stated prior, I chose specific Zentangle patterns that I knew had silly / funny sounding names because I knew this would engage young students, give them a source of laughter, and encourage them to discuss with their peers if they thought that the name matched the way it looked. The School District of Philadelphia is pushing for students to have more “academic speak” or conversations while they work that are about the content or lesson that they are learning. This was a really easy way for me to incorporate the goal of the district as I listened to my students chatter about why the creators behind Zentangles would give the doodles such names.

SWBAT: Students will be able to create an abstract work of art that is inspired by the art of Zentangle patterns, also known as “meditative doodling”. Students will be able to use watercolor paint properly using various skill building methods and techniques. Students will understand the

concepts of abstract art, pattern, color, zentangles, meditative doodling, and design. Students will gain an appreciation and cultural awareness of meditation practices of the past and present and learn how to use it

Keywords: Zentangle, abstract art, watercolor paint and art, meditation, meditative doodling

Materials needed: chromebooks or devices to look up Zentangles patterns (alternatively, you can print out materials for students), student grade watercolor paper, watercolor paint palettes, watercolor paint brushes, water basins and access to water, artist tape, presentation materials

Timeline for completion: 2 weeks for a longer, stretched out - less than that if you need it to be a 1-2 day lesson.

Direct Instruction: [Presentation I used with my class \(click here\)](#)

Day 1(45 minute class period): Introduce students to Zentangle art, abstract versus representational art, and what meditation is and how it relates to the project we are doing. In order to make sure my students are understanding the concepts of what we are learning, I have them take notes in their sketchbook that they will need to turn in as a graded assignment on Google classroom. An example of what this looks like for my 5th grade class is shown below. After students are prepared to take notes and engage with the learning, the instruction on Zentangle should start. Students will learn what Zentangle is and see examples of it. Afterwards, students will move on to learning what meditation is, its place in and outside of religion, and then reflect on how the concept of Zentangle and meditation relate to each other. Students will have the opportunity to silently respond in their sketchbook what they think the correlation is. Next, students will practice meditating with the guidance of the teacher. Prior to engaging in meditation with your students, I would get a sense of if this is a practice that can be done safely in your classroom, both at an environmental space level and knowing if this practice could trigger a trauma response from your students. Prior to starting this lesson, I had built relationships with my students, their families, and their homeroom teacher to understand if this could cause a negative experience or reaction for any of my kiddos. To me, practicing meditation with someone or a group of people can feel intimate, as I have my own trauma filled life

Open Sketchbook + Ready for Notes

→ **Open up your sketchbook to a clean page**

→ **Get ready to take notes on our new lesson. Write down “Things I learned:” and make 4 bullet points.**

Zentangle Lesson - Date:

Things I learned:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Meditation + Zentangle response:

experiences that are sometimes hard to block out while meditating. Alas, I am an adult who has been in therapy and developed coping skills. For the purpose of the first class, I used a video / voice on Youtube to help me. The fun imagery and light heartedness of the video I am linking may bridge the gap between keeping it light, fun, easy and comfortable without completely allowing students to go into a space in their minds that can be triggering. Make sure to have all students in a comfortable position. In my classroom, I allowed students to move to the floor, on top of their desks, or to lay down. I emphasized the importance of being comfortable. I let the first day of meditating only go on for about 2 minutes and this should be the maximum for kids on the first day. After the meditation practice is over, you can give students the opportunity to share what they felt or anything about the experience. Next, you can introduce the students to Zentangle patterns. With younger kids, I like to focus on the Zentangle patterns with silly names to get them engaged, as seen in the chart above.

Video: <https://youtu.be/wfDTp2GogaQ>

Homework: If you want, practice meditating with the skills we learned for up to two minutes. Teach your family members and friends what you learned.

Exit Assessment: In their sketchbook or note catcher, students should reflect on what they think the correlation is between creating Zentangles and Meditation. During the next class, students

will have the opportunity to share their responses with the class as a whole and the teacher should explain the correlation between the two after the students have had a chance to voice their opinions. An example of a student's response can be found below. In the student's response below, please note that the student was able to grasp the concept and emphasis I placed on the fact that meditation and calming your mind and brain can be a lot more difficult than letting it run freely, a fact I learned with Dr. Patel in his course. I believe as you engage in this practice with yourself and your students, you will find the amount of work you do have to engage in in your mind in order to find this calm and stillness. According to Dr. Patel during one of his lectures in my course, knowledge is the path to enlightenment. Yoga is the progressive settling of the mind into silence. When the mind is settled, one has unbounded consciousness. A question I may choose to ask my students, or even myself, is - could we be clouded by the chaos of our thoughts that make us forget who we really are?

03-13-24

Zentangle Lesson

Things I learned:

- Zen = Meditative
- Tangle = Doodle
- Zen + Tangle = Zentangle = Meditational Doodle
- Your brain does a lot of work for you just to meditate.

Meditation & Zentangle Response:

Both zentangle and meditation helps you focus, and less stressed.

Vocabulary: Zentangle, meditation, meditative doodling, doodling, abstract art, watercolor, line work, sharpies, pens, paint

Day 2 (45 minutes class period): On the second day, I started class again by having the students get comfortable in the classroom and sit, lay or rest in a way that would allow their brains to

escape into the relaxation mode of mediation that we practiced a day prior. This lesson was conducted with a group of 5th graders, so I kept the maximum time of meditation practice to two minutes. As discussed in our meditation course with Dr. Patel, it is important to note that meditation can open realms within a conscious mind that bring up feelings of trauma and truly, the opposite of tranquility or stillness. All of our students have life experiences that we have no way of knowing how these moments of quieting our minds can bring up positive or negative feelings. I continued to use the light hearted videos made for young children that I found on Youtube, to allow the voice of the narrator to guide my students with glances of colorful images and visualizations that worked for my age group. After our practice, students went back to their art making spaces. Students continued to work on their Zentangle pattern chart as seen above. Students should work on the Zentangle pattern chart for the remainder of the class.

Video: <https://youtu.be/wfDTp2GogaQ>

Homework: If you want, practice meditating with the skills we learned for up to two minutes. Teach your family members and friends what you learned. If you did not finish your Zentangle chart, take your sketchbook home and finish it for homework.

Day 3 (45 minutes class period): On day 3 of this lesson, students once again engage in our meditation practice with an emphasis on getting our brain into a creative and artsy mode because we are going to paint today. For the purpose of today's class, I informed my students that I wanted them to get into a free flowing meditative state with watercolor paint that had no restrictions and brought them back to the playfulness of being a child. I emphasized this in my classroom because I teach at an academic magnet school and our students work incredibly hard, inching each day to reach a level of perfection and mastery in their academics. My role as the art teacher had never seemed more important to give my students a sense of playful art making euphoria in contrast to the heavy studying and logical work that their day had brought upon them. For this class, the students were given a 4x4" piece of watercolor paper, a watercolor paint palette, a water basin, paintbrushes, and paper towels. I told the students to paint what they felt was right, to do whatever they wanted on that piece of paper without restriction. Of course, I went over the rules of watercolor painting, made sure to tell them and instruct them on how to clean their paint brushes so that the colors did not become disgusting and murky, losing the vibrant hue of the color they were supposed to be. I informed my students that having this

freedom to paint either abstract or representational images should not feel restricted and that they should let their mind flow freely, similarly to how we were practicing our meditation. At the end of class, we hung up our work on the board with magnets and admired the beauty and variation of the work. After, the students were instructed and trained on how to clean up.

Video: <https://youtu.be/wfDTp2GogaQ>

Homework: Finish Zentangle chart in your sketchbook if you have not done so already.

Day 4 (45 minutes class period): On day 4 of the lesson, please have the students engage in another moment of silent reflection or meditation. After practicing for a few days now, students should feel the routine and be ready for the 2 minutes of concentration. After the meditation practice, students should be handed out their final watercolor paper. For my class, I used 9x12" inch student grade watercolor paper. I also handed out artists tape to my students and instructed them to construct a border of tape around the perimeter of the paper. The purpose of this activity is so when they are finished painting, they will peel the tape to reveal a clean border that frames their work. A visual of this direction can be seen in the presentation I linked for this project above. After the students have adhered the tape to their paper, I emphasize the skill we had learned in class prior. Students are to place their free flowing consciousness into creating an abstract work of art using the color of their paint palettes to splatter onto the page as they calmly create a work of art. When the students feel they are finished painting, they are instructed to place their work on the drying rack for it to completely dry until the next class. When the work is dry, we will use spaces in the artwork to create and add our Zentangle patterns. Students should clean up their space when finished.

Video: <https://youtu.be/wfDTp2GogaQ>

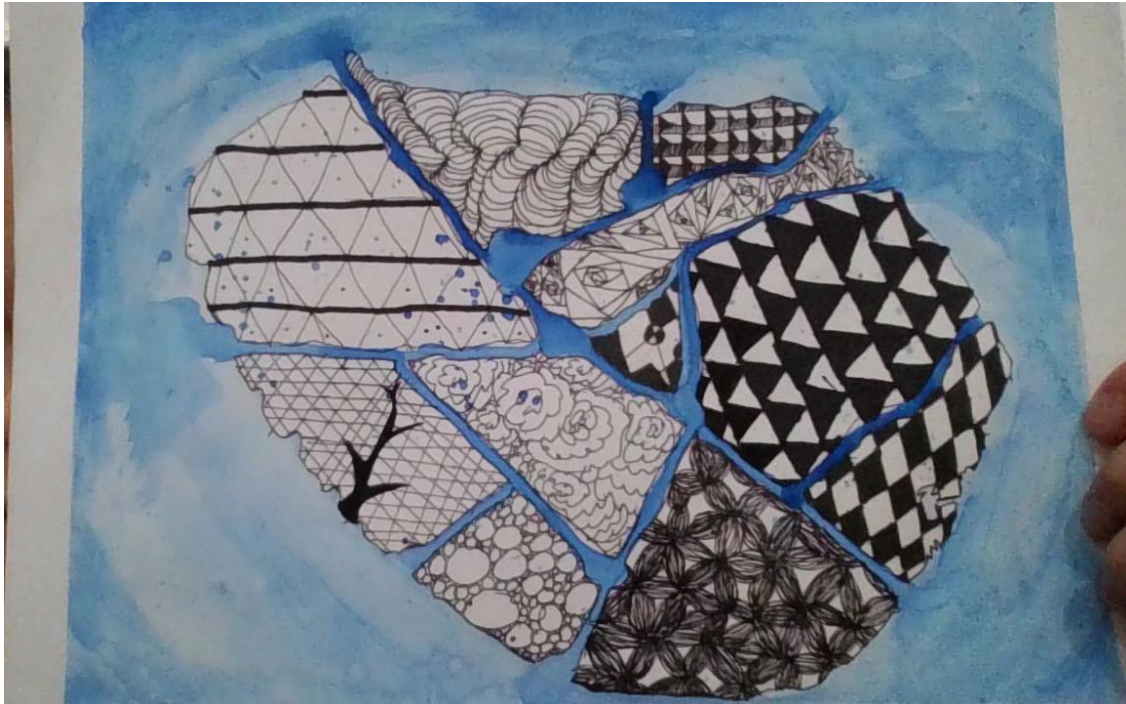
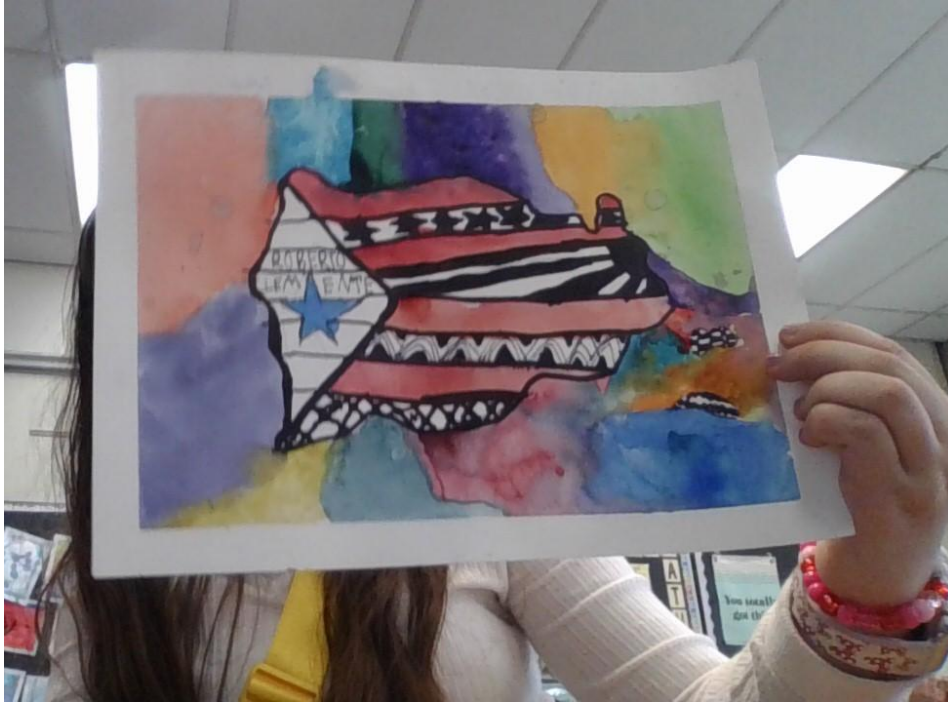
Homework: Finish Zentangle chart in your sketchbook if you have not done so already.

Day 5 (45 minutes class period): On day 4 of the lesson, please have the students engage in another moment of silent reflection or meditation. After practicing for a few days now, students should feel the routine and be ready for the 2 minutes of concentration. After the meditation practice, students should be handed out their final watercolor paper that was on the dry racking a class period prior. Students should then be instructed to take out their Zentangle pattern notes in order to reference what abstract doodles they can add into their project. Students should grab

sharpies, pens and markers, and fill whatever space they want into their abstract painting with the Zentangle art. An example of students finished work can be seen here:







As you can see in the photos above, students peeled back the artist's tape to reveal a clean border of the untouched watercolor paper. The students found the process of peeling the tape oddly satisfying and enjoyed seeing the clean border frame their artwork and it made them feel quite proud of themselves and their artwork. For the final days of this unit, you can choose to stretch it

out by having critiques with students, doing gallery walks, and/or having students make more. I had more than half of the class asking me for more paper to make another water, to make gifts for people, or just generally told me they enjoyed the mental release that this project brought them and they wanted to continue to engage in this Zentangle meditative art practice.

Exit ticket / assessment: Have students write down in their sketchbook or discuss aloud what they learned in this art project and anything they are taking away from this lesson.

Vocabulary: watercolor paint, watercolors, abstract art, zentangle, meditation, meditative doodling, doodles, yoga sutra

Annotated Bibliography

"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.

“What Is It?” *Zentangle*, zentangle.com/pages/what-is-the-zentangle-method. Accessed 27 May 2024.

This is the official website of Maria Thomas and Rick Roberts, the creators of Zentangle. This website is incredibly helpful in understanding the purpose behind Zentangle, the artists own definition and steps on how to incorporate it into your classroom.

“Zentangle Meditation for PTSD.” *PTSD UK* /, www.ptsduk.org/zentangle-meditation-for-ptsd/#:~:text=Zentangle%20is%20a%20form%20of,in%20mind%20while%20you%20draw. Accessed 27 May 2024.

When Zentangle first emerged in 2003 by artists and creators Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas, a lot of health care professionals, specifically those in the mental and behavioral health territory, jumped onto the Zentangle bandwagon to discover its benefits in facing trauma and as a form of meditation. This Zentangle meditation guide is specific for those with PTSD, which may help in guiding work with students who have faced trauma.

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.

Sheridan, Kimberly M., et al. *Studio Thinking 3: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education*. Third Edition. Teachers College Press, Generated by the IREX Online Application System on 3/12/2023 3:51PM. Page 10. 2022

Similar to the earlier edition mentioned by *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.

Sit, Shirley Man-Man, et al. “An Exploratory Trial of Brief Mindfulness-Based Zentangle Art Workshops in Family Social Services during COVID-19: Transitioning from Offline to Online.”

MDPI, Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 1 Sept. 2022, www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/17/10926.

An exploratory trial was conducted by scientists at the University of Hong Kong. The scientists conducted workshops of 30 minutes with families on how to use Zentangle to manage stress and strengthen familial bonds. The results have shown that Zentangle is extremely beneficial to mental health.

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.