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# Using Art to Promote Peace in the Lives of Elementary Aged Students

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USING ART TO PROMOTE PEACE  
IN THE LIVES OF ELEMENTARY AGED STUDENTS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

Megan McDonald

\*\*\*\*\*

Western Kentucky University  
2013

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Department of Education

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## ABSTRACT

*Guernica* was Pablo Picasso's most controversial piece, created as a political statement to show the devastation of war in Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. It is the inspiration for the Kid's *Guernica* Peace Mural Project, developed as a way for adolescents to visually express their ideas of peace as a global goal. With the completion of a peace workshop and a 3.5m × 7.8m moveable mural, Kentucky is now a participant in the project. The mural illustrates the creative collaboration of sixty fifth grade students, a local artist and myself. It will travel throughout the state of Kentucky during the year 2013, in hopes of starting more conversations about the importance of a peaceful global community.

Creating Kentucky's first entry into the international project was an ambitious process that involved the support of Western Kentucky University's Honors College, Hartstern Elementary, and the Kentucky Museum of Arts and Crafts. Funding was provided by the Faculty-Undergrad Student Engagement Grant, Honors Development Grant, Student Government Association, the Fund for the Arts 5x5 Grant and the Parent/Teacher Association of Hartstern.

Keywords: Guernica, peace, mural, art, global project

Dedicated to my mother, Kathy McDonald,  
who spreads compassion and joy everywhere she goes.

For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this  
mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move,  
and nothing will be impossible for you."

-Matthew 17:20

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project described in this volume would have been impossible to imagine, let alone complete, without the support of Hartstern Elementary staff, in particular, Arts and Humanities teacher, and my own mentor, Debbie Lockyear, my primary advisor and professor Mrs. Kristy Cartwright, and Western Kentucky University's Honors College Staff. These professional connections reminded me time and time again that I was in a field where I could make a difference, just like they were doing for me. I would also like to acknowledge the love and support from my family, friends and Sigma Kappa sorority sisters. Their constant encouragement meant the world to me. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my God who is the ultimate Peace-Maker. May my life, both in and out of the classroom, always be an echo of Him.

## VITA

September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1992.....Born – Louisville, Kentucky  
2010.....DuPont Manual High School, Louisville, KY  
2010.....Mission work in Dominican Republic  
2013.....Traveled with tutoring internship to Kinshasa, Congo

## FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Elementary Education

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## PREFACE

Beginning this project, my knowledge of art history, global projects and even classroom management was extremely limited. Every step in my Capstone Experience was a learning process and the journey has been more fulfilling than I ever imagined. Through the efforts and encouragement of many people involved in this project, I am proud to say that Kentucky is now a participant in the Kids *Guernica* International Peace Mural Project. I have been truly amazed by the connectivity within my community that has come from this project. Seeing such a diverse group working together to produce something with such great purpose kept me persevering through the difficult challenges that this project presented.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As a future educator, I am apprehensive about the unfortunate focus of many curriculums throughout the states. While it is true that reading comprehension, writing fluidity, and mathematics proficiency are critical components of students' success, I believe that educators have another equally important, obligation to today's youth. It is part of an educator's position to help students understand citizenship and how their actions directly impact individuals in their community and beyond. I also believe it is possible, albeit challenging, to incorporate lessons in good citizenship into the standard curriculum. By doing this, educators can ensure that students will not only be prepared for standardized testing, but also begin to find their place in our world.

As I prepare for my career with these beliefs in mind, I have begun to consider projects that would engage my students in larger projects and develop their ideas of citizenship while still remaining in the guidelines of the Common Core Standards of Kentucky. I wanted to treat my thesis project with the same motivation. The Kids *Guernica* International Peace Mural Project is an excellent portrayal of the ideas in my teaching philosophy. Within the time I worked with the 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Hartstern Elementary on the Mural Project, a multitude of subjects were addresses and developed. First and foremost was the enhanced Arts and Humanities education students can become involved with through this project. Luckily, at Hartstern Elementary, Arts and

Humanities instruction is valued. However, not every school has the same idea. Through an Art lesson on Picasso's *Guernica*, students received information on the Spanish Civil War in addition to the concept of symbolism. Mathematics principles have the potential to be introduced in regards to deciding the scale of the mural in relation to the individual student sketches. Finally, students writing skills were developed through persuasive writing workshops in which students wrote to businesses within their community to stimulate interest in the mural project and to gain support for future displays.

In addition to academic support, students also are instructed to build their class morale and the treatment of others in their school through workshops on team-building. In order to succeed, students had to work within a team, similar to how communities must work together to accomplish goals. Furthermore, the fifth grade students are encouraged to build positive relationships with classmates, even within particularly challenging peer relationships. Violence is consistently referred to as an unacceptable conflict-resolution technique, within a class, school, community and, even globally. The morale in the school can be significantly lifted throughout the duration of the project as students and teachers alike persevered to become "bucket-fillers" (a concept derived from the book Have You Filled a Bucket Today? by Carol McCloud which encourages positive behavior so children are able to see how very easy and rewarding it is to express kindness, appreciation, and love on a daily basis).

Overall, the project became something that an entire community could become invested in. For that reason, I am excited about the Mural's impact thus far and the potential for further impact it will have. It is my hope that through this project, others can

be inspired to create a Peace Mural or another type of stimulating activity that encourages children to learn and create beyond their textbooks in real-world scenarios.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ARTISTIC ANALYSIS OF PICASSO'S *GUERNICA*

*Guernica* was painted in Paris by Picasso in the year 1937; it is one of his more famous works of art and the most powerful political statement Picasso made in his lifetime. *Guernica* is oil on canvas painting designed in a color scheme of blue, black and white. This color scheme is extremely dramatic and causes the mural to look similar to that of a black and white photo. It is 3.5 meters (11 ft) tall and 7.8 meters (25.6 ft) wide, a mural-size canvas. *Guernica*, the focus on the painting sharing its name, is a town in the province of Biscay in Basque Country that was attacked during the German bombing in the Spanish Civil War. During the attack, *Guernica* burned for three days and sixteen hundred civilians were killed or wounded. The focus of the painting *Guernica* is to show the hardships and suffering that war inflicts on individuals, especially the innocent citizens of a country in battle. The mural became an anti-war symbol and it was displayed around the world after its commission. Scholars consider to the paintings style to be of neoclassic time period and an amalgamation of pastoral and epic styles. This style and the resulting color scheme could have been chosen to reflect the preservation of a photo. Also, a photo is factual evidence that shows an event occurs while telling a story; the mural does the same for the Spanish Civil way.

## Artist Background

Pablo Picasso (October 25, 1881 – April 8, 1973) was a Spanish artist who is more known for his co-founding of the Cubist movement; he is one of the most recognized figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Picasso was born in Spain and was artistically gifted from the beginning; his mother claimed that his first word was “lapis” meaning “pencil” in Spanish. He was enrolled in Madrid’s Royal Academy of San Fernando at age 16 but soon dropped out of formal education. Picasso exercised his creativity in many different art mediums, including oil paintings, sculpture, drawing, and architecture. He was also one of the first artists to utilize collaging and the constructed sculpture as forms of creative expression. Although Picasso was incredibly talented, he was not known for his kindness. He is said to have been a sarcastic, often cruel, man. Feminists today are not typically Picasso advocates because of a comment he made about women being “goddesses or doormats.” He was, strangely enough, considered to be charming by the women of his day. Picasso was the first artist to experience the intense attention of mass media. He often gathered this attention through his changes of artistic style, and the controversy his envelope-pushing art often aroused.

Other popular Picasso works are *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (1907) and *The Old Guitarist* (1903). *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* is one of the earlier works of Cubism. The canvas portrays five nude females, said to be prostitutes from a brothel in Barcelona. Each figure is depicted in an unsettling confrontational manner and none are conventionally feminine. The women are distorted in shape and look threatening. This painting speaks volumes about Picasso’s views on women. Like many Picasso paintings, it led to much controversy and anger, even among his friends and colleagues. *The Old*

*Guitarist* was influenced by the Expressionist period and depicts an elderly, forlorn man playing the guitar on the streets of Barcelona. The painting was created during Picasso's "blue period." Overall, the painting is full of sorrow. The dull blue palette creates a tone of melancholy and the posture and expression on the old man enhances the sense of hopelessness in the painting. Some art historians believe this painting expresses the solitary life of an artist and the natural struggles that come with the career; others see the painting as a metaphor for human life itself.

### **Description and Analysis**

*Guernica* shows suffering; people, animals, and buildings are depicted as being wrenched by violence and chaos. In the painting there are obvious and hidden images. The overall scene is looking into a room where a bull with enormous eyes stands over a woman. The woman is grieving a dead child that she holds in her arms. A focus of the painting is a large gaping wound in the side of a horse. There are two "hidden" images that are formed by the horse in the painting: 1) A human skull overlays the horse's body and 2) a bull seems to be goring the horse from underneath. You can see the bull's head by the horse's entire front leg – the knee cap forms the bull's nose. Some of the symbolism in the mural includes the hand of the dismembered soldier under the horse. His hand is grasping a sword from which a flower grows. The soldier's palm shows a stigma, which further investigation showed to be a symbol of martyrdom derived from the holes in the palm of Christ. These holes in the palm represent sacrifice. A light bulb glazes in the shape of an evil eye over the suffering horse's head; scholars believe that this light-bulb was a Spanish symbol for a bomb at the time. This is fitting to the painting being a reaction to the bombing from Germany. A frightened female figure carries a

flame-lit lamp which is believed to be a symbol of hope – this hope is a direct clash from the despair the light-bulb represents. Women and children are prevalent in the painting; this is said to be because Picasso feared for the safety of his daughter during the times of war. These feelings of fear were reflected in his artwork. Two other symbols repeatedly used in the painting are the bull and the horse. The bull is used as a symbol of destruction and is presumed to represent the onslaught of Fascism. Picasso said it meant brutality and darkness. In his lifetime, Picasso also stated that the horse represented the people of Guernica.

The subject matter and position of the subjects in the mural are very important to understanding the meaning of the mural as well. The shape and posture of the bodies express protest, obviously protesting the amount and degree of violence that the war has inflicted on everyone, especially the citizens. Picasso uses black, white, and grey paint to set a somber mood and express pain and chaos. Picasso learned about the bombing of Guernica, his home-town, through a newspaper article days after the attack. This could explain the color-scheme of the painting as well as the appearance of newspaper print in parts of the painting.

### **Interpretation**

The painting is about the effects of war and peace on not only a country but the individuals in that place as well. The artist proves that art can be used to mark a historical event and to make a political statement. Picasso's *Guernica* shows the devastation that war causes to innocent citizens. You can see the metaphors in the paintings through the visual clues in the principles of art, such as composition, balance, movement. The

elements of design that include color, line, shape, space, texture, value, and, form are also evident. All of these elements are effective in conveying the message the artist chose to express.

In Picasso's *Guernica*, color, or the lack thereof, plays a large part in conveying the message of his art. As mentioned before, the black and white color scheme emphasizes the drama of the bombing in the city. It also conveys the message that the political statement the bombing sent was very "black and white." There wasn't a gray area of morals in the bombing, according to Picasso and the citizens of Guernica. The war was extremely devastating for all involved and could not be justified by any means for Picasso. The lines in Picasso's piece are sharp and straight. They are strong lines that give the shapes definition. The shapes themselves are mostly geometric shapes. The lack of abstract shapes could be because that Picasso wanted his piece to be remembered. Even if the faces on the people in the painting are depicted in the traditional way, they are still faces. Viewers of the piece will recognize these faces and be affected by recognizing their own faces in the painting.

The element of space in Picasso's painting is interesting because even though real-life figures are depicted, the painting is two-dimensional. It also has many overlapping spaces. There is no atmospheric perspective in the painting, perhaps because Picasso wanted the viewer to feel as though he or she was directly in the painting, as if they were standing in the room shown. As for texture, there are parts of the painting that have the appearance of being made of newspaper. Picasso wanted his painting to be newsworthy and memorable, just as the event itself was. It is also reflective of the fact that Picasso found out about the bombing in a newspaper delivered to his house. The

darkest parts of the painting are in the backgrounds, perhaps to show that the war is causing people to fall into the darkness. The lightest parts are the people in the painting; this lightness shows the innocence of the civilians. The dark parts in the painting recede into the background and the light parts of the painting become the emphasis of the painting, making the people the focal point. The form of the painting is fairly realistic in size and portion to show that the war was real – Picasso didn't exaggerate any feelings from society in the painting.

When considering the principles of design in Picasso's paintings we can sense an irregular movement and rhythm. There doesn't seem to be order in the painting; this is because there was no order in the bombing. Violence creates chaos and that turmoil is reflected in the piece. The movement and contortion of the bodies is also important because it shows their opposition to the violence. However, even with the chaos created by the movement in the painting, Picasso still achieves a sense of balance and unity in the work. With the two-dimensional design of the painting, balance is achieved through arranging the elements in *Guernica* so that no one part of the painting overpowers another or seems heavier. There is equal weight throughout the painting. The asymmetrical balance creates interests for the viewer but also shows the tension and instability that Picasso wanted to convey.

### **Using the Art Pieces in Teaching and Subject Integration**

I believe that although Picasso's *Guernica* does have mature themes throughout and is graphic, it is not inappropriate for the average fifth grader. Violence and war is something most fifth graders today are probably acquainted with, unfortunately. I also

believe that confronting these topics and talking about the effects of violence is beneficial for children that age because it causes them to think about their own actions and reactions. One day the children today will be leaders of the world and it is important for them to understand how a community is affected by violence.

Lastly, in teaching this lesson, I would be sure to incorporate other subject areas and other core content for the fifth grade class. This lesson would be an excellent opportunity to discuss the bombing in Guernica and its role in the Spanish Civil War. The history lesson could also be continued in a discussion that the Congress of Peoples for Peace played in the beginnings of the World Peace Council formation. The basic origins of the organization founded by the communist party in the Soviet Union could be discussed. The class could also look at other peace organizations existing today and see what the groups are doing to actively promote a peaceful global community. Reading different quotes and articles about both the artists and the paintings could also become a reading lesson for the class as well. Finally, a lesson on the importance of community, peaceful relations, and conflict resolution could be taught as an incorporation of practical living skills that are typically reinforced in the fifth grade. Overall, I believe that analyzing and interpreting Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* could be very beneficial for both the art education of a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class as well as their general core content knowledge.

## CHAPTER 3

### TIMELINE OF PROJECT

Early Spring 2012 ..... At this time, I first became interested in the impact Arts and Humanities can have in the lives of elementary aged students and began to pursue ideas for my Honors CE/T Project relating to this topic.

Late Spring 2012.... While enrolled in Honors 402 and researching different global projects, I discovered Kids *Guernica* International Peace Mural Project and submitted my proposal to create Kentucky's first entry. The proposal was approved by WKU Honors College.

May 2012..... Throughout the month, I met with Debbie Lockyear, art teacher at Hartstern Elementary, to brainstorm how to turn small ideas into big murals. We decided a canvas painted mural would be the most portable mural and the easiest mural to create.

July 2012.... Together, Debbie Lockyear and I met with Principal Patsy Cox at Hartstern Elementary to discuss various funding venues. Debbie and I submitted a grant proposal to the Kentucky Fund for the Arts and the Kentucky Center for Arts and Crafts

August 2012..... Before my own semester started, I introduced myself to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class at Hartstern Elementary and campaigned for the project with the teachers I was hoping to involve. I was so relieved to gain the teacher's support and flexibility.

September 2012...On International Peace Day 2012, I hosted a workshop for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class at Hartstern on peaceful relationships, the harmful effects of bullying, and the

concept of a global community as introduction to the Peace Mural Project. During this time, we received funding from WKU, FUSE, KMAC, and KFA.

October 2012...With the help of Debbie Lockyear, I taught an Art Appreciation class on Picasso's *Guernica* and formally introduced its effect on our own upcoming mural project to the 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Hartstern. We also met with Alice Stone to brainstorm ideas for the project. During the workshop, the students sketched their own visions of what "peace" looked like to them, with instructions to avoid clichés like peace signs and hand gestures. Alice Stone from Kentucky Museum of Arts and Crafts was hired to orchestrate the creation of the mural.

January 2013...Together, with the help of Alice Stone, the student's perception sketches of peace were assimilated into one collage scene and the artist's final sketch was displayed at Harstern. Funding from Kentucky Fund for the Arts paid for supplies for mural painting. Every day for one week, two hours a day, the students worked on the mural. After school, Debbie Lockyear, Alice Stone, and I stayed to further complete the mural.

February 2013...Once the mural was complete, I sent out letters to the community describing what the mural project was about and the role that Hartstern had played in the project. Together, with persuasive letters from the students and included photographs of the finished project, we petitioned for various places to display the mural. Soon after, we received the first mural booking for Oxmore Center in Louisville where the mural was displayed for three weeks. At the end of February, we received a request from the Kentucky Performing Arts Center to display the mural at the YUM! Center during the Dalia Lama's upcoming visit to Louisville. We booked KPAC for the month of May.

March 2013...During March, the mural was on display at the Center of Research and Development at Western Kentucky University as part of the university's REACH Week. During this time, two storyboards were designed and produced to go along with the mural and explain the project. I presented the mural project during REACH Week Student Research Conference.

April 2013...This month was a difficult month in the project and brought along the biggest challenges. Scheduling conflicts with KPAC caused them to cancel their booking of the mural, which would mean the mural would no longer be on display at the YUM! Center during the Dalai Lama's visit – something everyone involved with the project had been immensely excited about. Debbie Lockyear and I made it a mission to get the mural back at YUM! in time for the Dalai; it was just a matter of finding another vender displaying at YUM!

May 2013...After four weeks of dead ends to find a way to get the mural back to YUM!, we reached valuable contacts at Kosair Children's hospital who scheduled the mural as part of their display during the Dalai Lama's visit.

June 2013.... One day before the Dalai Lama arrived in Louisville, the mural was hung in the YUM! Center and was displayed for the duration of the summer.

#### Upcoming Events

September 2013....Construction at Hartstern Elementary is set to be complete during this month and the mural will be permanently transferred to the school in which it was created – just in time for the next International Peace Day.

## CHAPTER 4

### INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY WORKSHOP – INTRODUCING GLOBAL COMMUNITIES

International Day of Peace – Lesson Layout

**5 min** Introduce myself and Peace One Day

Paraphrase/ Explain what Peace One Day is: “Peace Day is a day of ceasefire – this means a day when people don’t fire guns and there are no wars. It is also a day of non-violence – this means that people everywhere don’t fight or argue, and children aren’t bullied. I created this day with my friends and my family. We asked the world leaders to create a special day when all the countries of the world agree not to fight. It’s like your birthday - a day when everyone comes together all over the world to celebrate Peace.” –

Jared Gilley (Creator of Peace One Day)

Introduce the concept of being a “bucket-filler” and building others up as the theme of this year’s class project

**10 min** Think/Pair/Share with the people at your table what the following words mean to you and what they have to do with the idea of peace. (Words will be given one at a time and after a few minutes of discussion, volunteers will share their ideas.)

Teamwork

Global

Conflict

Compromise

Violence

**5 min** Transition: So let's talk about these words.

Is violence something that only happens other places? Where do we see violence and conflict? (at home, in our neighborhoods, on TV, at school)

Right now, we have to leave the violence in other countries to the adults. But you all have a special job as kids in America right now. It's up to YOU to make sure that when you're older you know how to be a peaceful citizen. Part of that is learning how to work together, how to solve conflicts and how to use your words. Let's get up and start learning that stuff now so that our school can be a peaceful place.

**10 min** Get up and move activity: Untie the Knot

Work in groups of 8

First group to untangle themselves wins. After go back to seats to talk about activity.

What worked in your group (looking for answers like teamwork)

What would have happened if one person didn't work with the team? (the whole group would have been stuck)

LESSON: Working as a team is the best way to accomplish a goal. If we work together for a more peaceful school, home, community and world we can accomplish that goal as well. But just like one person can hold back the game they can also hold back the whole community. Etc.

**10 min** Read Enemy Pie by Laura Chandler

Discuss with students how they can address their own enemies, as children, and how the same concepts apply as adults

Introduce how war and other global conflicts can sometimes be considered bullying on a larger scale

Ask students how they can positively interact with their enemies

**15 min** Explain peace postcards and have students illustrate what peace means to them.

Students can also illustrate what makes them feel peaceful. Display the cards in some way TBD...

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MEDIA EXPOSURE

Perhaps the biggest surprise of this project came from the amount of media attention it received. That involvement of the local media was something I never expected when Debbie Lockyear and I turned in our first Press Release to two local news stations. From the very beginning, however, this project had attention outside of the school walls. The following is a list of news stations, newspapers and other media productions that covered the story of 60 students' mural creation:

- THE HERALD: Western Kentucky University Student Newspaper:  
Student creates Picasso-inspired peace mural with elementary schoolers  
By: Jacob Parker

Friday, March 22, 2013

One WKU student worked hard to complete and tour Kentucky's first submission to the Guernica International Peace Mural Project, a project based off of Pablo Picasso's Guernica, to increase global awareness of the necessity of peace.

Louisville junior Megan McDonald, with the help of an artist and 60 fifth-graders from Hartstern Elementary School in Louisville, worked to put together a submission that was a first for Kentucky. The mural is now touring in different cities throughout Kentucky.

“To get the submission through, it took a lot of dedication and a lot of people working together,” McDonald said. “I couldn’t have done it without the school, the school couldn’t do it without the artist, the artist couldn’t do it without the funding.”

McDonald went through many preparations with the students before beginning the project, including showing students different images of peace, teaching them conflict resolution skills, how to be a peaceful citizen and what a global community is.

“They were told to draw what peace looked like to them, and places they felt peaceful,” she said.

After sketching out their representations, they were given to Alice Stone, an artist for the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, who then compiled a sketch of what they would look like in one piece. In an essential paint-by-number piece, the children painted while McDonald regularly visited the classroom via Skype. About a week later, the entire 25 ft by 12 1/2 ft piece was completed, in the exact specifications as Picasso’s original. McDonald said there has been many benefits from this project, including valuable experience for her future career.

“I thought it was really neat to trust 60 kids to paint something,” she said. “You give kids a project, and they’re going to go for it, especially if they care about it. That was an eye-opener for me as a future educator.”

Debbie Lockyear, the teacher of the fifth grade class, said that it was an honor to be asked to participate.

“As the piece started to fall into place, it has really been amazing,” she said.

Lockyear said she was thankful for the success of the project.

“It’s interesting and wonderful how many people have made this come true for these kids. It embodies what we’re trying to convey,” she said.

The artist who helped create the project, Stone, said at the beginning it was a little overwhelming.

“I tried to put it in similar stacks, to represent all the students,” she said. “I wanted it to flow. And once things start, they usually have a tendency to fall into place.”

Stone said the painting was first outlined, then filled in by students, and it took almost 20 hours altogether to complete.

“I spent about ten hours with the kids on the piece, and ten hours by myself doing the outline and the finishing touches,” she said.

“It’s even better than what I could’ve imagined. I can’t wait to walk in and see it.”

○ KFC YUM! Center Press Release :

#### STUDENT'S PEACE MURAL ON DISPLAY AT THE KFC YUM! CENTER

Louisville, KY (May 20, 2013)

An entry into the The Kids’ Guernica International Children’s Peace Mural Project is now on display on the main concourse of the KFC Yum! Center. The mural was done by Western Kentucky University Student, Meg McDonald, along with help from sixty fifth-graders from Hartstern Elementary, as part of an honors thesis project for McDonald’s program at WKU. McDonald received several grants for the project, including grants from the Kentucky Fund for the Arts and the Faculty-Undergraduate Student Engagement Grant.

The mural will be on display at the arena for a short period of time before moving to different locations in the city. The peace mural project came in conjunction with another peace-inspiring event at the venue, His Holiness, the Dalai Lama's visit for a public talk and teaching on "Engaging Compassion."

- JCPS MONDAY MEMO

#### Hartstern Students Make Art for Peace

Students at Hartstern Elementary are using their creative powers to put more peace into the community.

Last week, fifth-grade students completed painting a 312-square-foot mural, which will travel throughout Louisville and to Bowling Green in the next year. The custom design is a result of a partnership between Hartstern arts and humanities teacher **Debbie Rutledge Lockyear**, Western Kentucky University (WKU) student Meg McDonald, and the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft (KMAC).

Students began studying peace on Fri., Sept. 21, which was International Peace Day, and then segued into participation with the Kids' Guernica International Children's Peace Mural Project. In the project, students throughout the world participate in studies of peace and conflict—including studies of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*—and translate their peace message onto a large painted mural.

"I've seen students take pride and ownership in this," Lockyear said. "They're able to say, 'This is what I think peace could be.'"

Working with KMAC art contractor Alice Stone-Collins, all 60 students drew symbols that to them represented peace. Students were prohibited from using words or the

traditional peace symbol. Stone-Collins drafted the design for the mural by incorporating each of the students' symbols.

The result features an idyllic waterfront scene with mountains in the distance, birds, butterflies, a lighthouse, dogs, music, and a large sun. One student suggested that being on stage is peaceful, so Stone-Collins designed stage curtains that adorn the sides of the mural.

Throughout the process, Lockyear and Hartstern students worked with McDonald, a junior at WKU who is studying elementary education. McDonald attended Hartstern as an elementary student, and her mother, Kathy McDonald, is a teaching assistant at Hartstern.

Meg McDonald worked with students to practice a song and dance routine to accompany the effort, and she helped students write persuasive letters to local businesses and organizations with hopes of scheduling them on the mural's rotation list. Hartstern is behind Jefferson Mall, which is one location where students hope the mural will be displayed.

The canvas mural is in five pieces and has grommets to make installation easier.

"We're hoping the mural will travel for a year before it ends up back at Hartstern," Meg McDonald said. "It's amazed me what students are capable of doing. I've learned a lot about letting students create things, and it's been an eye-opening experience for me about writing lesson plans. This project will start a lot of conversations."

- WKU ARETE

Arete contribution submitted by Kali O'Rourke

Honors scholar participates in the Kids' Guernica International Peace Mural Project

When Megan McDonald first heard about the Kids' Guernica International Peace Mural Project, she thought the project would be too big for her CE/T. Now almost a year later, she receives calls nearly every day about displaying the completed mural.

McDonald, an elementary education major from Louisville, worked with fifth grade students at Hartstern Elementary School in her hometown to put the mural together. The Guernica International Peace Mural Project is based off of Picasso's Guernica, which was created during a time of war in Spain. McDonald hosted a peace workshop for the students and taught them about conflict resolution and global community. After the workshop, each student drew his or her idea of what peace meant. Artist Alice Stone combined these drawings into a 25-by-12 feet mural, which the students then painted. McDonald said that the students should be really proud of the mural, and she thought it was "great to see the whole school get excited about it."

Currently, the mural is on display at the Oxmoor Center in Louisville. The mural will travel throughout the Louisville and Bowling Green areas for the rest of 2013.

McDonald already has five months booked. She hopes that the mural will bring awareness to things that kids can do to benefit their community and that the children know now "that they can do something cool that has the ability to impact the world".

The mural will be on display at WKU's Center for Research and Development after Spring Break and will remain there until the beginning of April.

## VIDEO CLIP LINKS AND SYNOPSIS

JCPS "Our Kids" (2013, January). Retrieved November 2013, from

<HTTP://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=4ZONLU4NPTG&LIST=UUNSPBGN59PNSN5LDSCTUBQQ&INDEX=5>

This interview was conducted by a representative of Jefferson County Public Schools as a “Spotlight” feature. Each quarter, a school in the county is recognized through this program and featured on local television. Hartstern Elementary was chosen as the Spotlight school because of the mural project. I, Mrs. Lockyear and Alice Stone were interviewed.

Louisville Elementary School Helps Spread Message of Peace Through Art. (2013, January). Retrieved November 12, 2013, from

<HTTP://WWW.WHAS11.COM/NEWS/EDUCATION/LOU-ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL-HELP-SPREAD-MESSAGE-OF-PEACE-THROUGH-ART-187211421.HTML>

During the period in which the mural was being painted, Louisville news station WHAS 11 visited Harstern and interview students, teachers and myself about the project. This video clip was featured on the news station during the week the students were painting. This news clip became slightly more political than I and others involved were hoping, because of the timing of the tragic Sandy Hook shooting.

View from the Hill (2013, March). Retrieved October 12, 2013, from

[HTTP://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?FEATURE=PLAYER\\_EMBEDDED&V=PGDE7N7QOPI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=PGDE7N7QOPI)

This video clip comes from Western Kentucky University's "View from the Hill" program which highlights a university student's accomplishments each week. This clip was filmed during the time the mural was located at the Center for Research and Development in Bowling Green Kentucky and was the first news clip to release pictures/video of the finished mural.

WNKY News (2013, January). WKU Mural. Retrieved March 2013, from

[HTTP://WWW.WNKY.NET/VIDEO?CLIPID=8445015&TOPVIDEOCATNO=234717&AUTOSTART=TRUE](http://www.wnky.net/video?clipid=8445015&topvideocatno=234717&autostart=true)

This news clip was also filmed during the time the mural was located in Bowling Green and was conducted by the Bowling Green news station, WNKY. This interview served as publicity for the mural and an encouragement for the community to go and see it in its first public location. My contact from View from the Hill was able to provide me with this interview opportunity.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PROJECT CHALLENGES

With the beginning of every lofty project, it is inevitable that some challenges will arise. After accomplishing the biggest challenge of determining what exactly I wanted to do for my thesis project, for a while, aspects of the mural project seemed to just fall into place. The right people were found through Hartstern's prior connections and involvement with the Kentucky Museum of Arts and Crafts. The funding was coming in at a promising rate and I became confident that it wouldn't be an obstacle. In fact, my first real challenge came when the students began to brainstorm ideas for what they wanted their peace mural to look like. I asked the students to design a postcard sized paper with what peace looked like to them. The results we received were not as inspired as I and Ms. Lockyear had been shooting for. Unfailingly, almost every interpretation included a somewhat sloppy circle with uneven lines to represent a peace sign. Many included the self-explanatory label of "peace" written in fifth-grade proficiency cursive. However, these students had done nothing wrong. The assignment itself wasn't engaging them. Sure, they had been actively involved in the peace workshop that day but there had been no formal connection to the art aspect of our project, other than my mention of a future, seemingly distant mural. The students didn't have enough background knowledge or purpose to be engaged in the task.

Realizing this, I knew that it meant a change in my original instruction. I wanted to give the students more knowledge and more connections with the purpose and history behind the international project we were participating in. Doing this meant becoming more educated myself. Thus, the art analysis of Picasso's *Guernica* and the intense symbolism seen in the painting began. Thankfully, I was taking the art class for education majors offered within the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences at the time. Through the guidance and knowledge from professor Miwon Choe, I was able to grasp the elements of art seen in Picasso's mural and develop lecture materials for my fifth grade students to see Picasso's use of symbolism and create their own.

When I returned to Hartstern a month later, I taught my first art real art class – something that was neither an original component of my project nor something I saw myself ever doing. On a fifth grade level, we took apart Picasso's *Guernica* and considered all of the elements of art. We hypothesized the *why* behind each element and we related these answers to our own mural. Instead of drawing their typical flowers, peace signs and labels, this time, when asked to draw what peace meant to them at the end of the lesson, students showcased their ability to think deeper and more abstractly. They drew places and memories that represented peace to them. They drew world leaders shaking hands and the stability of the four seasons, a nontraditional aspect of peace. One student, who had struggled with anger issues in previous lessons, drew herself singing on stage at her church, stating that in those moments she felt most peaceful. Her drawing eventually became the starting point for our mural and what other drawings became centered around.

I was extremely satisfied and proud of the second round of drawings. These drawings were mural material. With extra time and extra motivation, students were able to reach a

higher level of cognition and a deeper understanding of the material. When the last child explained their interpretation and visual representation of peace, the first major challenge of the project had been overcome.

The second significant challenge of the project came during the week the mural was painted. With the ever-increasing demands of teachers to fit countless curriculums into a single day, finding free time for the students to work on the mural during the school day became a challenge. I didn't want to take up their valuable time in their core content areas if it wasn't necessary. Students were able to work on the mural during their arts and humanities time, thanks to curriculum flexibility and lesson planning flexibility from Mrs. Lockyear. Thanks to flexibility from the fifth grade teachers Mrs. Reinert and Mrs. Corwin we were able to provide the students with double arts and humanities time during the week the mural was painted. When students were not working on the mural, they were drafting and rewriting their persuasive letters we would send to places in the community to persuade them to display the mural. This persuasive writing was also a connection with their language arts curriculum. Because of the flexibility of both Hartstern staff and Alice Stone, the artist from Kentucky Museum of Arts and Crafts, we were able to complete the mural in one week.

The third major challenge my team encountered was the most difficult challenge to overcome in the entire project experience. Early on in the scheduling process of the mural, Kentucky Performing Arts Center eagerly called, wanting to display the mural during the months of April and May. I was ecstatic to have this booking planned so early in advance and by such a prestigious place in Louisville. It was also a place in which the students would be able to visit on a field trip, which became a plan for the fifth grade

class. A few days after the schedule for their two months with the mural was finalized via email, I received a phone call asking if KPAC could take the mural to the YUM! Center in Louisville during the Dalai Lama's visit, as part of their display. I was floored by this honor and quickly shared the news with the school. The school shared the news that our mural would be displayed as part of the Dalai's visit with the superintendent of Jefferson County Public Schools and the story was featured in several publications that came out that week, including the Monday Memo (a weekly email sent to all of the Jefferson County Public Schools highlighting upcoming events and accomplishments of the schools in the district). However, within a week of this exciting news, I received an email canceling KPAC's reservation of the mural. This was handled incredibly unprofessionally on their part. Their explanation was that the exhibit had been overbooked and an endorsement from the Speed Art Museum had taken over the mural's spot in the display. What this boiled down to was that someone was paying KPAC to display their artwork, something that I was unable to do with the mural. It was truly a heartbreaking email to read and devastating news to deliver to those involved in the project. It was definitely the biggest setback in our project.

Fortunately, it was not the end of the story for the mural. After three days of being hurt and disappointed, I decided that the mural *would* go to the YUM! Center. Thus, began my quest for connections to those involved in the Peace exhibit that would be at YUM! during the Dalai's visit. I began actively pursuing the places represented in the exhibit and asking them if they would be interested in displaying the mural my students had painted. I even tried to contact YUM! which proved to be much more difficult than I assumed. Finally, I reached contacts at Kosair Children's Hospital. Although the original

agreement was that the hospital would rotate the mural throughout their three locations, the plans soon changed. A phone call I thought would be about canceling another reservation was actually a proposition to move the mural to the YUM! Center...as part of Kosair's display for the Dalai's speech. This was the connection I had been hoping for and this was the news I was delighted to share with the team. The mural was indeed displayed at the YUM! Center during the Dalai Lama's visit to Louisville and it is currently still on display in the center.

The final challenge in the project came soon after the Dalai's visit to Louisville. With the money provided by the FUSE grant I received, I was able to work with WKU Publications to design two large storyboards. The boards traveled with the mural to its display locations and gave viewers a description of the Kids International *Guernica* Peace Mural Project and acknowledged the staff and students involved in the creation of Kentucky's first entry. I was incredibly proud of the storyboards and thankful for the endorsement and support from WKU to create them. However, I was deeply disappointed to hear that they were stolen from the YUM! Center sometime during or within a week after the Dalai visit. This was disheartening to hear because of the implications about society behind it – it saddens me to think that someone felt compelled to steal a board discussing peace in our community. The board is virtually worthless to those outside of the project but the sentimental value is priceless. Fortunately, with remaining grant money, the storyboards were able to be replaced. The current storyboard on display with the mural is a combination of the original two boards and made with a less expensive material.

The challenges I encountered throughout the project were difficult to overcome at times but ultimately were all settled in a productive way. The solution found worked out best for everyone involved in all four cases. The challenges I faced during the last year regarding this project reassured me that it was a worthwhile cause. Each time I faced adversity in the project, I was forced to fight for the cause and each time my students, the mural and the case behind it meant more to me.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### REFLECTION

Throughout this project, I was often asked what the next step for the mural was. Whether that question meant “Where is the mural’s next travel location?” or “When do you present the project?” people involved were always curious what was going to happen next. Now that the project is technically over, and the mural is set to move back to its home at Hartstern over winter break, I expected the forward thinking questions to come to a gradual stop. But I was wrong. I find *myself* asking these questions now. “What will happen next with this mural?” “How will my students take this project forward?” “How do *I* want to take this project forward?”

Ultimately, I would love to take this project further. At some point in my career I would like to teach abroad. I think it would be incredibly interesting and worthwhile to expand my involvement with the cause internationally. An additional challenge and opportunity could be to somehow involve an American class with a class abroad to complete a mural together. Obviously, this is a lofty project with many logistics to determine, but I could say same the thing about the project I am defending this semester. If there is anything I have learned through this project it is this: Given the right people behind a worthwhile cause, any dream can become a reality.

## APPENDIX A

### Questions to Ask a 5th Grade Class & Possible Predicted Answers

For this portion, I have chosen several introductory lesson questions to get a class of 5th graders thinking about artwork. For the purpose of this portion, I am assuming that the students do not know the historical background of the painting. I would explain the historical significance of the painting as well as the artist's biographical background after the discussion comparing and contrasting the paintings.

- How is this picture different from real life?
  - The arms and the legs of the people don't connect
  - The bulls are the horse are inside
  - The eyes on the people are in the wrong places
- What things do you recognize in the painting? What things seem new to you?
  - I recognize someone holding a dead child, a light-bulb and a lantern/candle. I recognize the broken sword. I don't recognize the people on the floor.
- What words would you use to describe this painting?
  - Sad, Scary, Intense, Chaotic
- What do you think is the most important part of this picture?
  - The most important part is the light-bulb. The most important part is the people in the picture.
- What can you tell me about the colors in this painting?
  - The picture is all in black and white and dark blues
- What objects seem closer to you? Farther away?
  - Everything looks like it's on top of each other. Nothing looks close or far.
- What do you notice about the people in the painting?
  - They are leaning weird ways
  - They have newspaper skin

- They are dying
- They are screaming
- What sounds do you think this painting would make if it could?
  - You would be able to hear screaming and crying
  - Animal noises from bull and horse
- Pretend you are inside the painting. How does it feel?
  - It doesn't feel good. I am scared. It is really loud and I don't know that's going on.
  - What do you think is good about the painting? What is not so good?
  - It's good because there is a lot of detail in the people's faces. It isn't as good because there is no color in the painting. That makes it dull.
- What do you think is worth remembering about this painting?
  - You should remember that it was all in black and white
  - You should remember how different pieces fit together
- Why do you think the artist painted this work?
  - Maybe something bad happened to him – he was upset
  - Someone might have broken into his house
  - Maybe somebody he loved died, like the person holding the child
- Is there a particular rhythm or motion you notice in the painting?
  - People seem to be falling over. There is a shift for things to be leaning to the left.
- How is this painting unified? Is it nearer to chaos or sameness?
  - There is chaos but the chaos takes up the whole painting, not just parts of it
  - The painting is unified because its all in the same colors
  - It is unified because it is of one scene
- How is this painting like other works the artist has done?
  - A lot of his works look like he put pieces of the picture together
  - The faces all look similar
  - Things are overlapping like in his other paintings
- Is there anything in the artist's background that helps you appreciate this effort?
  - Picasso is from Spain and Guernica is a city in Spain

- This might be how he sees his hometown
- What feelings, memories or associations does this evoke in you?
  - It makes me wonder why everyone in the painting is so angry and sad. It makes me remember a time in my life where I was with a lot of people who were all scared.

## APPENDIX B

### LETTER SENT OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

To Whom It May Concern,

Hello! My name is Meg McDonald. I am a junior at Western Kentucky University. I am writing this letter in hopes that you will be interested in my cause and become involved in a project that I have fallen in love with over the past nine months. For my honors thesis project at WKU, I wanted to register Kentucky as a participating state in the Kids' Guernica International Children's Peace Mural Project. This meant creating and illustrating what the concept of peace looks like. The mural needed to be painted on a Picasso's "Guernica" size canvas (27ft x 12.5ft). One condition of the mural was that it had to be moveable. The idea of the mural project is that the painting would travel, much like peace should, throughout a community.

Obviously, I needed help with this ambitious project. I am so thankful to have been given the opportunity to partner with Hartstern Elementary in Louisville, KY for this project. The wonderful Arts and Humanities teacher there, Debbie Rutledge Lockyear, and I have been working together since May in order to make this project something possible for Harstern students to participate in. We have applied for and received several grants for the project including the 5 X 5 grant from the Kentucky Fund for the Arts and the Faculty-Undergraduate Student Engagement (FUSE) Grant. We also received funding from the honors college and student government association at Western Kentucky University as well as the Parent Teacher Association at Hartstern.

Sixty fifth grade students were able to work on this project and working with them is something I will never forget. The students individually illustrated what peace looked like to them. They were encouraged to use symbolism, and not the traditional icons of peace such as the famous peace sign. This led to them drawing places that made them

feel peaceful, such as a park, or a tire swing. One student even drew herself on stage and said that was where she felt most peaceful. Other students used simple colors and patterns that they said made them feel at peace. It was an eye-opening experience to see the innocence and simplicity the children were able to manifest in their drawings.

The drawings were then given to Alice Stone, an artist with the Kentucky Museum of Arts and Crafts. With her fantastic talent, she was able to take components of each child's drawing and assimilate them into one abstract landscape mural. Alice's compilation of student ideas is astounding. The students were all able to paint the mural. It is entirely kid-painted, other than touch-ups by Alice, Debbie and myself. The students have spent an incredible amount of time working on this project and have enjoyed being able to be such a large part in the creative processes. We were very fortunate that our students and the project were featured on both WHAS 11 news and WDRB news. JCPS' "Our Kids" and JCPS' Monday Memo journalists were also able to come and share in our creation, which was exciting for everyone.

Now that mural is finished, we are in search of places in the community that would be interested in displaying our mural. You are receiving this letter because our students would like to involve you in our project. Your organization was specifically mentioned by students in class discussions brainstorming possible locations. It would mean so much to them to see the mural displayed in a place they care about.

Our goal is to have our mural displayed in several locations throughout the year 2013. Ideally, the mural would stay in each location for about a month allowing for ample viewing opportunities in the community. We are very flexible about scheduling where and when the mural would travel. It is our belief that the project would be best organized if each organization wishing to display the mural would contact us with which month in the year 2013 would work best for them. From there we would be able to plan out a calendar for the mural's traveling.

On behalf of the 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Hartstern Elementary, Debbie Lockyear and myself, I would like to invite you to be a participant in this project. We believe that our community would greatly benefit from a message of peace from the children that will one day be

guiding the future of our world. It is our hope that you believe the same. Please consider finding a place for our mural. If you are interested, feel free to contact Debbie Lockyear or myself with any questions for concerns. I have listed our contact information below.

Thank you so much for your time. I hope to hear from you soon.

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APPENDIX C



