

# ONLINE ART TEACHERS

A newsletter for teaching with & without access to home technology

## Home-Based Art Learning: 30 Creative Ideas for No Tech, Low Tech, and High Tech Art Projects

Online Art Teachers K-12 was born out of a desire to give art teachers across the U.S. and the world a platform to support each other through the COVID19 period of social distancing and schooling changing from brick and mortar buildings to the living rooms of students' homes. Formed on March 11, 2020 by Dr. Trina Harlow of Kansas State University and also Texas, two days later six nationally respected art educators, NAEA members, and members of their state art education associations joined this service project: Sarah Ackermann (Illinois), Beth Dobberstein (Wisconsin), Kate Miller (Kansas), Bob Reeker (Nebraska), Randy Robart (Ohio), Marie Taylor (Kansas). The Facebook Group "Online Art Educators K-12" was formed on March 11th and six days after forming, had over 2,300 members and is still growing. A [Google Folder](#) in which art teachers can share resources with each other was also created.

Dr. Harlow shared [this article](#) to help with the confusion that teachers were experiencing (and still are). This group was established to be a support for art teachers across the United States and the globe that find themselves being asked by their schools to deliver eLearning to their students OR having to teach their art courses remotely using non-tech instructional methods. Please [email the group](#) to ask questions, share information, etc. Finally, OATK12 hopes that COVID19 exits as fast as it appeared and that you and your students, schools, families, and communities are all safe and healthy and that very soon we won't need this group for the purpose in which it was established. Stay safe. Stay well.



By Dr. Trina Harlow

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#OATK12

During turbulent times, teachers often find a resolve and a way to work through challenges. Being an art teacher can bring an added element of complexity to delivering instruction to students who may be temporarily participating in home-based learning for a variety of reasons. Certainly COVID19, the contagious virus that appeared on the world stage at the end of 2019, is causing many art teachers to rethink how to teach art for an uncertain amount of time as home-based learners. Yet with ingenuity and the application of creativity that art teachers are known for, an engaging and partially self-administered curriculum can be provided for students. Important planning by art teachers will be highly affected by students' grade levels and abilities. With 21st century schools attempting to meet the needs of 21st century students (Day & Hurwitz, 2012; Eisner, 2001; Freedman & Stuhr, 2011; Hausman, 2011; Timmerman, Sen, & Hum, 2018), art education advocates for new frontiers in official school art curriculum (Gude, 2017), and the temporary social distancing of early 2020 certainly provides an example of how art teachers must adapt and change practice.

It is important to remember that as stressful as the unknown of providing home-based learning for students may be for public and private school teachers – and other educators, children and

adolescents will also be affected by this stark change in their routine. While at first this new routine might sound fun to students (Yay! No school!), quickly the realities of learning from home will set in. Social distance, as prescribed by the U. S. Center for Disease Control, also means social isolation for the child or young person who is no longer learning within the walls of the school building surrounded by classmates, friends, and school staff, and instead find themselves learning from home.

Many factors will contribute to how successful the home-based learning experience is for students. For a variety of reasons, not all students have a comfortable setting at home in which to learn. Students may not have a good support structure at home. Resources are a challenge for some families and this will have an effect on what kinds of activities a teacher can do with home-based students. Loneliness may soon set in for students. And finally, as the varying realities of what may potentially happen in the students' community and family, and broader geographic area, the emphasis their caregivers place on home-based learning may change in importance. For all of these reasons, one of the most important student needs that teachers can prepare for is how to meet their students social emotional needs with both a well-organized means of communication and a plan for encouraging messages for students, just

as we do in brick-and-mortar classrooms and schools. Additionally, teachers will need to have a contingency plan if they were to become ill. Perhaps teachers within schools could form teams and provide their basic and overall plan to a teammate or an administrator who could help students in the event their teacher becomes ill. Making sure a teammate has a list of your students and knows your communication plan for contacting students will be important.

Hopefully, the disrupted school routine is temporary. While art teachers take great pride in delivering quality instruction with lessons built out and scaffolded from the normative set-up, entry activities, content presentation, studio procedures, clean-up, and a concluding activity, art educators – and all teachers – should understand that since the situation causing this disruption in educational routine is not ideal, the lessons provided to students during this temporary national emergency do not have to be ideal—good, but ideal does not have to be the goal. Perhaps a deviation from normal art education objectives is warranted. Many practitioners and scholars remind that 21<sup>st</sup> century school art curriculum should go above and beyond the art content, and reach into other important areas of student learning (Day & Hurwitz, 2012; Davis, 2008, 2012; Klein, 2003; Zimmerman,

2002). Teachers should focus on planning and preparing intriguing thematic activities that evoke learning, but also inspire the creative imagination of the student – art IS about imagination. Perhaps one way to look at lesson planning for this temporary break in brick-and-mortar classrooms is providing students with a delightful (yes, I used that very human word) or sensitive (understanding this may become hard for some students) memory of how art and their art teacher made the COVID19 experience a much better memory for them. Most people have a teacher or teachers that they remember decades later who brought education to life for them and made it more purposeful, meaningful, engaging, and MEMORABLE. “That” should be the goal – think of this time period as if you and your students were going on a creative journey, and as you begin, visualize you sitting in a students’ apartment or home. Start thinking of what normal items might be in homes and can be used as part of artistic inquiry, and also think about how imagination can be tapped into during this temporary period of home-based learning in a new and imaginative way. Be generous and share your ideas with your fellow art teachers, as we are all better together.

The following are 30 ideas for home-based learning using non-tech, low-tech, and high-tech capabilities. Teachers know their students have

varying levels of resources and assistance at home. Individualizing instruction should be a priority for students' home-based learning, just as it is for learning within teachers' classrooms. Teachers should consider not planning a "one-size fits all", highly structured kind of weekly or multi-week plan for instructing students who are completing art lessons, activities, and experiences at home. Perhaps teachers should provide students' caregivers with a list, such as the one below, and have students and/or caregivers individualize their choice of projects. Completion grades may need to be considered for this temporary time period. Many schools are already telling teachers that no completed assignments or art projects should be dropped off at schools or other identified places in order to be graded so that contagion levels can be kept down.

As varying options of planning for students' continued art education at home are being considered, teachers may want to consider planning a list of options, with guidelines for the number of selections a student and/or their caregivers should make. Clear communication by the teacher will be the key to not adding stress for the teacher, student, or caregiver. Perhaps teachers should ask elementary students, who typically have art one day a week, to choose one activity per week on a provided list of lesson or assignment choices. Older students

could participate in a more intensive effort on projects such as the ones suggested on the below list.

Additionally, older students could easily have a sketchbook activity each day with provided prompts. Teachers may need to quickly make sketchbooks using school copy paper or art room paper and distribute to students, and even place in zipper or slider storage bags with a pencil or a few colored pencils, markers, or crayons – remember many homes may not have pencil sharpeners. Interestingly, "in the good old days" we used a small kitchen knife or pocket knife to sharpen pencils. Advanced art students could use this temporary time period to do in-depth studies of art projects that they and their teacher agree upon.

By giving advanced students the opportunity to help design their own creative activity – as is often done in advanced art classes, older students will have opportunity to help personally design their learning and hopefully increasing their interest.

Regardless of what temporary home-based curriculum is chosen for and with students, art making and the study of art will most likely be healing and happiness-providing for students during uncertain times. Some students may grow tremendously in their interest and ability in art during a period of home-based learning. Art students may find surprising value in art making, perhaps even more so than in the

brick-and-mortar classroom, while experiencing the quiet and calm of art making at home during this disruption in normal instructional practice, in being creative, and learning while in a different kind of space. Perhaps the teacher and learner will both benefit from students learning to also become more responsible for their own learning, resilient, and self-reliant during home-based learning.

## No Tech



At first glance, these ideas may seem more appropriate for elementary-aged students, but with age-appropriate planning, a teacher could take these basic ideas and alter them for varying ages of students. Younger students may need parental help or assistance from siblings. Older students would not require as much help. For each of the assignment ideas below, students could either take a photo with a cell phone and submit to the teacher, or sketch and write about the assignment in provided sketchbook.

**1. Found Objects Sculpture:** Ask students to find objects around the house. Themes could be provided, such as red items, textural items, items reflecting nature, items that represent yourself, items reflecting emotion, items

that are metal, and so on. The list is endless. Students could either bind items together with string, yarn, tape, or wire – depending on what they have at home and what might or might not be appropriate to attach to the items so they are not damaged. The items, however, do not have to be bound together. Students could lay these items out on the floor in a sculptural arrangement and either take a cell phone photo to send to their teacher or draw the sculpture in their sketchbook.

**2. Kitchen Art:** Being exploratory in the kitchen is an outstanding idea for an art project. Some ideas are provided here to demonstrate the types of activities that students could do, with or without supervision as warranted. There are so many creative ways students could apply an artistic lens to cooking, baking, and food styling. Here are some ideas:

- **Food Faces:** For snacks or meals, students could make creative arrangements of food on plates. Students could photograph their projects and submit to the teacher or draw in their sketchbook and describe the experience. [LINK](#)
- **Sponge Butterflies:** If students had access to kitchen supplies, such as sponges, coffee filters, and other kitchen related supplies, they could make kitchen sculptures in a variety of ways.

This link demonstrates this type of idea: [LINK](#)

- Homemade Pop Rocks: Perhaps making pop rocks, or other creative food items, will help pass the time. [LINK](#)
- Bread Art: While making homemade bread is an art form, some students and/or their caregivers may be inspired by turning a normal types of food into a more artistic version. [LINK](#)

**3. Scavenger Hunts:** This tried and true school activity could become a very engaging art lesson for any age of student. A creative teacher can think of many innovative ways to do a scavenger hunt, for all ages of students. Students could also design their own scavenger hunts. Ideas are similar to the Found Objects Sculpture above. Some thematic ideas are:

- Primary, secondary, complimentary, or tertiary color hunts
- Value hunts
- Textural hunts
- Shape hunts
- Architectural element hunts
- More personalized hunts such as finding something that is special to them, something that is old, something that belonged to someone special in their family, something that is shiny, something that represents 1, 2, or 3 point perspective, items that

are science or history related, words in books, and so on.

- This list is potentially endless.

**4. “I Spy” Game:** Teachers could write a list of “I Spy” prompts or students could design their own “I Spy” game and share with the teacher who could then share with the class. These could have a thematic focus. Teachers could divide students into partner groups as this period of home-based learning begins so that students could work on this and other projects together with a partner, especially if students have access to a computer, iPad or notebook, cell phone, or land line telephone.

**5. Sidewalk Chalk:** Perhaps students have sidewalk chalk at their homes or perhaps they could make homemade sidewalk chalk and complete an abstract art making assignment. [LINK](#)

**6. Aluminum Foil Sculptures:** By using aluminum foil, or items such as old magazines, newspaper, paper, wax paper, plastic bags from stores, and so on, students could make or weave sculptures or items with a utilitarian purpose. [LINK](#)

**7. Sketchbook Prompts in Teacher-Made Sketchbooks:** One of the most basic tools teachers have to use in planning home-based learning for students is the sketchbook. Teachers can quickly make sketchbooks for

students using school copy paper or art room paper by folding paper in half and stapling near the fold. Teachers might enjoy making sketchbooks such as this one if they only need to make a small number. Older students could be resourceful and use paper provided by teachers to make their own sketchbooks. [LINK](#)

### **8. Art-Project-in-an-Envelope:**

Organized teachers could quickly place items for a simple art project, further investigation, or exploration into envelopes and put in a supply pack to send home with students. While still at school, students could help make these envelope investigations. One idea would be to cut colored paper in various geometrical shapes, print of a page of information about Piet Mondrain or another artist known for using geometric shapes, and place these items in an envelope for each student. If teachers have enough paper for a background and extra glue sticks, these could be placed in the envelope as well. Otherwise, students may potentially have these items at home or they could simply lay the paper shapes out in various configurations, and photograph or sketch them.

### **9. Zip Lock Plastic Bag Challenge:**

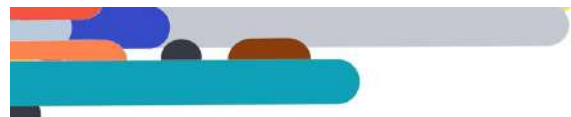
This is an exciting idea and would involve some prep work by the teacher. In most art classrooms, teachers have boxes or tubs full of paper scraps and

odd or left-over embellishments that have been saved because art teachers save everything. Make “grab bags,” so to speak, of miscellaneous art supplies and assign students to do something creative with what is in their bag, or give students a prompt for an assignment for this bag challenge.

### **10. Architecture Challenge:**

Home-based learning is a great time to complete architectural studies. Have students study their own home and how it is built. Have them draw a room, draw how their doors or cabinets are designed, and so on. Students could also design their own house using paper and pencil. Teachers could give basic or specific prompts.

## Low Tech



These low tech art assignment ideas involve using flashlights and other lighting sources, kitchen ovens, music players of varying types, various miscellaneous items students may want to use such as batteries, and cell phones. Cell phones may not seem very low tech, but they are included in this category as by simply having access to a cell phone, students can do art projects with varying levels of technology and easily take photos or make short films. Again, for each of the



assignment ideas below, students could either take a photo with a cell phone and submit to the teacher, share in a class pre-arranged text or app group made for students, or other designated ways to communicate between teacher and students or students to students. Students could also sketch and write about the assignment in a provided sketchbook.

**11. Painting or Drawing to Music:**

Drawing to music, even with pencil and paper, is a good way to be both creative and address emotions. Teachers could make a class playlist. Students could choose their own music. This idea could become a very specific assignment by the teacher or a very-open ended request to explore music while drawing.

**12. Cell Phone Photography or**

**Filming:** Many art assignments could be given for cell phone use with prompts for photography or making short films.

**13. Cell Phone Partners:** In order to help with the isolation students may feel during home-based learning due to the COVID19 period of social distancing, teachers could assign each student a partner, forming these partnerships while considering the abilities individual students have to communicate. Students could send each other photos of art assignments, work collaboratively on assignments and projects, and even

provide feedback and critique in this way.

**14. Cell Phone Art Show:** Teachers could make a Group Me and students could share images of their artwork and art assignments in the app.

**15. Cell Phone Directional Drawing:**

This is a well-known game in which two students are situated back to back. Prior to the game, Student 1 draws a quick sketch of an item. Student 1 then gives directions to Student 2 in order to help them draw the drawing that they have not seen. Student 1 states things such as “draw a big circle in the middle of the page, about 3 inches in diameter,” and the student who is sitting on the floor or at a chair behind the student giving commands then draws what they were asked to draw. Neither can see the other. Student 1 gives Student 2 directions to draw the entire drawing that Student 1 drew at the beginning of this exercise. This could easily become transformed into a cell phone partner activity where one student gives positional directions and the other student draws. The drawing could be done on pencil and paper or with varying devices and apps.

**16. Shrinky Dinks:** Shrinky Dinks were a fad in arts and crafts many years ago, but making homemade Shrinky Dinks is a unique art project. Students could make these melted plastic projects



according to a theme or using their own imagination. The Shrinky Dinks in the provided link use the clear plastic trays that cookies and crackers are sometimes in when *inside* paper packing, boxes, or other packaging. Students need access to an oven to make Shrinky Dinks. [LINK](#)

**17. Shadow Art:** Positioning household items so that they cast a shadow, and then tracing the shadow, and completing it as a finished artwork with various art media is one idea, but by using flashlights and other light sources, students could easily investigate the same object from many angles and times or sources of lighting.

**18. Ceramplifier:** Using tubes such as Pringles potato chip cans, toilet paper rolls, paper towel rolls, wrapping paper rolls, and other tubes that food or items come in, students can design ceramplifiers for cell phones. A ceramplifier is an object with a hole cut in it to insert a cell phone so the sound of a song, video, or a conversation is amplified. These could easily be embellished with collage or painting. If teachers and students do an Internet search of the word ceramplifier, many ideas will be readily available. [LINK](#)

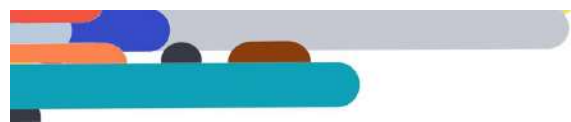
**19. Phone Stand:** Students can make a phone charger holder for their cell phones using some of the same items

from the ceramplifier project above.

[LINK](#)

**20. Trash Robots:** There are so many ways this art project could be accomplished at home. Students could use trash items (of course with no possibility of contamination from a virus) or found items to make robots of varying sizes and shapes. These robots can be as simple or creative as the teacher or student would like. Students could have a photo of themselves on their cell phone as the face of the robot and make a place for the cell phone to slide down into the robots facial area. When doing an Internet search of making robots for elementary art or middle or high school art, many ideas are available, and many use batteries, wire, and other components to add movement, sound, or lights to even cardboard robots.

## High Tech



If teachers have the ability to use high tech eLearning with students and to use technology including computers, digital notebooks, and cell phones with students' learning and students have access to the Internet, then there are as many vast choices as the Internet and also the use of free or purchased Applications. The challenge, as always, is how to select which technological

offerings to use. Hi Tech assignments can be given by the teacher with many requirements, or students can be asked to work with teachers to develop their own project. Teachers can allow students to tap into their own unique interests and explore gaming, coding, maker-space types of projects, applications, photography, and other interests. Working to individualize learning for students who have access to Hi Tech during home-based learning has the potential to give students an opportunity to fill their time in social isolation with something of great interest to themselves. Perhaps an art teacher could simply assign students to learn what coding is, how it is done, and how it is used, and think of some ways coding and art could be used together, without even making the project. It would be outstanding at the end of a period of social distancing if students were much more knowledgeable about coding.

**21. HP Reveal:** This app can be used in a variety of ways and is very easy to learn how to use. Essentially, while in the app, the student takes a photo of an item that will become the “trigger” for a video will play. They then film the video and attach it to the trigger. Then, when both of these steps are done, while in the app, the student can hover the phone over the trigger, and the video they made will start playing. Using a live video platform such as Zoom or others,

teachers could also arrange for a course meeting where students all shared their HP Reveal projects and by holding their phones near the computer camera, students could play the HP Reveal project on their phones so that students watching in Zoom could see the image first and then watch the video.

**22. GoReact:** There are many live video feed applications on the market. Some schools may already have an account with a live video application for teachers and students to use. GoReact is an app that teachers can use to set up a class for students, invite students to join the class using an email invitation which shares a link to the class, and view students videos after they have taken them while using the app. Teachers can even comment on the actual video with time markers anywhere in the video. Students will also need to have the app on their phone or laptop and film while in the app. The value in using apps made for live video is that they have taken into account how large video files can be and usually are, and their app completely gets rid of the frustration of trying to share a film made on a person’s phone with various individuals. Sharing a film straight from cell phone photo/video folder or laptop can be done and many teachers do this every day, as well as students, but apps such as GoReact make it so much easier to do.

**23. Photoshop Collage:** Photoshop is one of those software applications that art teachers and students can never know enough about. Most users probably use only a fraction of what Photoshop has the potential to do. Teachers could simply assign students to discover three or five or ten new features of Photoshop they have never used in a thorough investigation of the software/app and then share their findings with classmates in a way determined by the teacher. Or, the teacher could provide some online tutorials for Photoshop and ask students to complete the project. Making a collage using Photoshop is described in the following [LINK](#).

**24. Google Art Project**

Google has partnered with over 60 museums and galleries across the world to both archive and document priceless pieces of art. Virtual tours are also provided by these museums. Teachers can plan specific assignments using the Google Art Project link or have students do their own investigation with requirements provided by the teacher or as a completely student-driven investigation. [LINK](#)

**25. Online Tour of the Louvre:** Most of the world's most known museums provide a web page dedicated to teachers and students. Teachers can plan specific assignments by assigning each student in the class a certain time

period or exhibit, having students complete the assignment, and then upload the assignment within a Google Folder established for the assignment or Google Classroom. This would be a wonderful opportunity to get home-based students out of their geographical location and take them on a journey around the world during a period of social distancing. [LINK](#)

**26. Tricia Fuglestad:** The work of Tricia Fuglestad is well known to many art teachers. Be sure to check out this link with many resources that she provides for Hi Tech art. [LINK](#)

**27. Skype in the Classroom:** Skype in the Classroom offers many choices for advanced art study and one such choice is to visit the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Generally, Skype in the Classroom contributors provide lesson plans, activities, events, speakers, and so on. Teachers can learn of the many options provided by Skype by becoming familiar with [education.skype.com](http://education.skype.com). [LINK](#)

**28. Mirrored Room:** One of M.C. Escher's revered works is "Hand with Reflective Sphere." In this artwork, Escher studied how perspective changed or evolved and he often used mirrors, spherical balls, and other reflective items to do this study. By studying how an image changes while looking into a reflective ball or other misshapen reflective item, students can

see that perspective changes in regards to how the image looks. Students can use magnifying mirrors, magnifying glasses, binoculars, mirrors of various sizes and shapes, mirrored balls, and other objects they find around the house that seem to reflect images to draw a room in their house in a whole new way. This assignment could also be used as a metaphor for getting through potentially turbulent times due to COVID19 and demonstrating to students that our perspective determines our thoughts. [LINK 1](#), [LINK 2](#)

**29. Drawing App Exploration:** For teachers that are able to assign Hi Tech assignments or who are differentiating learning during a period of home-based learning based upon students available resources, it would be fascinating to have students fully explore one, two, or three drawing apps in an in-depth study OR to assign each student a different drawing app to explore, based on who needed to use free apps or who already had access to purchased apps or who could potentially purchase apps. An Internet search reveals many good drawing app choices. [LINK](#)

**30. iPad “Structure”:** For students who have iPads, teachers can assign a project in which the student uses found objects such as old boxes, plastic storage tubs, and so on to design a structure to hold their iPad. The iPad

can become a part of the project when students strategically design the iPad structure to have a place for the iPad to be situated as part of the overall project. Examples are making a traditional looking “television-style” holder for their iPad, making Monet’s garden in a box and cutting out a place to slide the iPad that will play an animated view of Monet’s garden, or making a Photo Booth stage out of a box complete with curtains to hold a Photo Booth video while being played. Imagination can go wild on this project.

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