



## **Encountering Intercommunity Dialogue: A Verbal and Visual Journaling Experience**

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### **Abstract**

Many times, across curricula, we ask our students to be reflective, give details, be specific etc. but we do not give them practice, feedback, or visible outcomes. Often we do not know how to encourage creativity or demonstrate a real out-of-the-box **response**. Verbal and visual journaling and documentary **process** engage students and others in a journey of discovery, reflection, and creativity that can be shared among themselves, exchanged with co-communities, and exhibited as artifact that is testament to an authentic and enjoyable process...coloring outside the lines with permission!

### **General Description of Session**

Participants will participate in a hands-on activity that involves making a small folded book. This will be a means of introducing participants to the processes and products involved in visual and verbal journaling. The presenter will share the parameters of the journaling process that she uses as an assessment tool in oral communications classes and outline how this process was used to connect two co-communities in a civic engagement project in the spring of 2005. In addition to the discussion of journaling, a description of the project will be presented and discussed, and a sample of the documentary video and book to be published will be available.

### **Foundations for the Session**

St. Louis Community College (STLCC) has a very active Service Learning/Civic Engagement (SL/CE) department, a Communications department that is very supportive, and the State of Missouri funds projects generously for institutions and individuals. This instructor, in addition to teaching communications, is also an artist who is actively engaged in public and community arts process and projects.

One of those community art projects involves working with men who are homeless in a collaborative setting with agency staff and several artists and partners. These men and a group/class of community college students engaged in a semester-long verbal, visual, and video exchange process that culminated in a shared meal at the shelter and a joint exhibit at the college's library. Sharing the project and its process (successes and challenges) and facilitating a discussion with feedback from peers are the motivations for presenting this information.

### **Session Goals**

- Presentation of concepts/examples of verbal and visual journaling in general.
- Presentation of artifacts and anecdotal evidence of its success in this project.
- Discussion: What is community art? How does it fit into a specific curriculum?
- How does it support and relate to service learning and civic engagement?
- Participants will connect with each other through sharing of stories and ideas.

### **Status of Project**

Images from this project are included in the database maintained by the Americans for the Arts as an example of artist/community college collaboration. The project was featured in *Community College Journal* in the December 2005/January 2006 edition. Presenter has applied for a grant through the St. Louis Community College Foundation to publish a book documenting the written and visual work produced. This book will be distributed to students and men who participated and the agency that serves the men. It will also be available at the STLCC library and copies will be available to the SL/CE program as documentation of a successful project. It will also serve as a tool to train and encourage other instructors who are considering incorporating service learning into their curricula.

Presenter intends to use the knowledge gained in this project to facilitate other projects in future semesters.