LESSON/ACTIVITY: by Jean Leider

Role Model Portrait in crayon, maker, watercolor or mixed media

LEVEL:

4th (but will work with any grade 2nd and up)

OBJECTIVES:

Use proportion and symmetry to draw a portrait
Make language arts and social emotional learning connections to the book
Grandfather Ghandi by Bethany Hedges
Support portrait with expository or narrative written work

MATERIALS/TOOLS:

9 x 12 or 18 X 12 white paper
watercolors
crayons or markers
pencils
erasers
Grandfather Ghandi book

VOCABULARY:

Portrait mentor role-model Ghandi
Features proportion guidelines middle/halfway

PREPARATION:

Read Grandfather Ghandi. Talk about why Ghandi was important to the world. Talk about why Ghandi was important to his grandson. How did he make his grandson feel special? What is a role model? How was Ghandi a role model to his grandson? Who do you admire? Who is your role model: Is it a family member, teacher, someone in your community? If you get mad, who helps you to calm down and get through it?

PROCEDURE:

Question students about what a role model is and have them brainstorm who their role model might be. Portraits can be done with a variety of mediums, crayon, marker or watercolor. I like to combine crayon and watercolor. The portrait aspect can be as simple or in-depth as you want it to be. If you want an in-depth portrait, practice several times.
First do a guided practice, then a semi-independent practice with students telling you or showing you on the board where to place features. Use guidelines to divide the portrait for correct placement of features (see examples on the last page). There are lots of resources for how-to-draw portraits online. This lesson is written with 4th grade in mind, because of the writing element but I think it could be done with any grade from 2nd up.

Tips:

Drawing facial features:
Eyes: The eyes are halfway down on the face. Use a broken line across the vertical and horizontal middle to get a symmetrical portrait. They are shaped like lemons, almonds or a football. Have students measure their eyes with their fingers. There should be space between the two eyes that measures about the width of an eye.

Noses: Noses are hard for kids. Encourage them to do noses that have curves, not L noses. I show and tell them that L shaped noses are great for cartoons and they should do those at home.

Mouth: Encourage students to draw a serious closed mouth. They want to draw a smile but the teeth usually don’t come out great. I have them look at each other’s mouths. I tell them that the serious mouth starts with a horizontal line. On top of the horizontal line it’s like a heart, on the bottom, it’s like a smile.

Ears: I have them touch the tops of their ears and walk their fingers in to their faces. “Where would your ears start if they were on your face?” Then I have them walk their fingers to the bottoms of their ears. “Where would your ears end if they were on your face?” Ears are long! They start parallel above your eyelids and end parallel to the bottom of your nose. For easy ears, I say draw letter C and backwards C.

VARIATIONS:

If you do a watercolor portrait you can have students sketch lightly with pencil first. You can outline with a black crayon before painting or have them outline with a black sharpie after they have painted.

If you do paint, have them power color in the eyeballs and eye whites with crayon. Then students can paint over the whole face and the paint will resist with the crayon.

Watercolors don’t have a lot of variety for skin colors. You may need to mix some up using thinned tempera paint. Experiment by mixing brown, white and a little orange. Keep mixed colors in a plastic container or yogurt cup. Any brush will do but thin flat paint brushes help students get a more even wash of paint for their face. Sometimes I trace my hand and mix up 5 different skin colors. I paint each finger a different skin color and label each finger 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Then I label the paint containers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Students can match their hand to the painted hand and see which color is closest to their skin color.

Students can paint themselves with their role model or just paint the role model.

WRITING:

Go back to the questions asked during preparation. Have students write about their role model in an expository or narrative style. Display student writing underneath the portraits. See example on the following page.

RESPONSE AND EVALUATION:
Have students share writings and portraits. Are portraits somewhat in proportion?

Everything I learned about art teaching I learned from Emma Lea Mayton. She taught me how to teach a variety of wonderful projects like clay folk art suns, papier mache Kokeshi dolls and Chinese Calligraphy. From her I learned how to fire a kiln, and manage a class, grade and keep records and hang art work. She showed me that art teaching required long hours but was well worth it. As a mentor, she recognized my strengths while helping me strengthen my weaknesses. After working closely together we became friends. When she took me out on her boat I felt special.

I admire Emma Lea because she is so productive and helps others. In addition to teaching art she has been an administrator and she’s also written books about how to teach art. She’s older than me but exhibits more energy and stamina than I have. I wish I had her energy! Ms. Mayton is always on the go, doing projects, helping others like helping people build houses in Mexico. She’s traveled the world and she fights for what she believes in. I hope you have an Emma Lea in your life that blazes a trail that you want to follow. But your Emma Lea won’t really be an Emma Lea because there is only one Emma Lea Mayton.