Comments from Ida Lucia Tino:

This group of lessons has evolved over time, and has improved with age. Initially it ended with Da Vinci's proportion theories of the human body. I felt a need to include a Spanish artist to celebrate our students' Hispanic heritage, and Picasso was the one I chose. I started off by using small prints of his work, but when the Internet became available in the computer lab, I immediately went on line to find out if there was a Picasso web site that we could use.

Many of our students have had some experience with computers, but the excitement that was generated by actually being able to enter a 'virtual exhibit' was greater than expected. I found the students wanting to explore other possibilities on line after they had completed their Picasso research. The students were told that any self-investigation had to be art related. Several students discovered a Leonardo da Vinci web site that featured his notebook drawings and shared their 'fantastic find' with the class.

Researching Pablo Picasso on the Internet proved to be fun as well as informative for all.

Planning the process of using Picasso's proportions came instantly to me because part of the purpose of the portrait lessons is to teach the students the practical use of measurements, decimals and fractions using proportions in art. The students noticed that Picasso used mixed media in his art and were encouraged to do the same. I took out all of the drawing materials I thought the students might want to use and gave them their choice.

Giving the students choices in the style of art that they could work in really helped to individualize for learning abilities and styles. By using their own computer printouts to determine the proportions in a Picasso portrait and by following along with the demonstration lesson, the students had no trouble understanding the way in which the artist went about dividing his own canvas or drawing. The abstract cubist style proved the least threatening to students with the least skills since it did not require a faithful representation of the person the students chose to draw. But even those students who chose a more realistic Picasso style found that by using the proportion element the task was facilitated.

The curriculum that developed to teach both 5th and 6th grade art, stems from my experiences as both an early childhood teacher and a 'junior high school' art teacher. I teach art as the interdisciplinary subject that it is, and the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts reinforces everything I believe art education to be. I love the fact that the standards touch on all the areas of learning through art and help teachers to make connections across the disciplines. I find myself referring to them frequently because of their structure and relevance.

When Mr. Frank Fanelli observed this lesson last year he noted that, "Mrs. Tino's experiment was truly an integrated lesson in which learning standards from English,

Language Arts#1; Math #2; Science#4 & 6; Social Studies#2 in relation to how Da Vinci …changed history through art".

I think making connections across the disciplines really makes lasting impressions on children. Since most children are visual learners they tend to comprehend what they can see. Television, video games, anything with pictures, movies etc. are things that attract children because of their visual propensities. The math that is included in this lesson has a very visible nature. Students who ordinarily have difficulty understanding fractions suddenly are able to see how fractions are used in a real life situation. Since we are measuring everything in centimeters they are also learning how the decimal system works and how it reflects fractions also. The students learn practical application of math concepts during this learning experience.

The inclusion of Picasso's use of proportions happened because I wanted to introduce the students to a Spanish artist (Our school population is 56% Hispanic and ever increasing. More than 50% of our student population is at or below poverty level. We are considered to be "A Needy School"). The Hispanic Society of New York includes paintings by Goya and Velasquez, but I wanted them to learn about a uniquely different kind of artist. An artist that the children could have fun with; one that wasn't so classically orientated, one that presented a wide variety of styles that have relatively simple proportional elements. I wanted them to see how artists are able to see things differently and how they used proportions in different ways. I selected Pablo Ruiz Picasso, the artist who was responsible for creating more styles of art than any other in history. I was using library books, our only source of visual aides, and small prints and then went on line and found the Picasso web site that allowed all of the students to enter the virtual exhibition of "Picasso and Portraiture", an exhibition that toured the world a few years ago. Using the computer projector and screen, the students were able to engage in discussions about Picasso's many styles. They could compare, analyze and evaluate each portrait. We were able to discuss the proportional elements of each of his styles and even compare them to Leonardo's use of proportions. The children's enthusiasm was immeasurable and followed them into the classroom. On the day they received their color computer printout of the portrait they selected they were eager to begin this lesson on Picasso's use of proportions. They had visual information to refer back to which acted as a support system. Their positive attitudes made this lesson successful!

What I love about it is that my students are visiting art-related web sites on their own since this lesson. They often tell me about the new ones they have discovered when they pass me in the hallway at school.

In my reflection upon some questions that were presented to me about possible changes that I would consider making to this lesson I have discovered the potential of this lesson. I have applied the exact same principles of proportionality in a sixth grade studio art class where the students are making enlargements of photographs or prints to use for another project. In most cases the students are using landscapes and they have been able to determine the proportions of the picture's parts in much the same way. I

would keep this lesson on proportionality in tact, but it could very easily apply to any painting, by any artist, of any subject matter at all. That's the beauty of it!

When asked about the inclusion of shading, my response was; some of the students who felt comfortable with using shading or felt a need to use it to represent an abstract sculptural form did so. I did not stress it because I wanted to keep this lesson as simple and uncomplicated as possible. The students had enough of a challenge with the mathematical concepts I wanted them to understand and use. I wanted the students to understand that there isn't always just one way to solve a problem, and they needed to find the best solution for themselves.

The rubric I developed for this lesson is based upon the standards for art education at the Intermediate level. I really worked hard at making this rubric specific to this project yet broad enough to apply (with simple modifications) to other learning experiences. A student could take this rubric and even modify it him/herself to use on a museum or gallery trip to analyze and compare other art works. At the end of the lesson I spent about 5 or 6 minutes with each student as he /she helped me to assess the finished work using the rubric. The rubric became a very useful teaching tool as well as a means of assessing the students work.

Because this lesson did not rely upon drawing skills to make the portraits 'true to life' representations, all the students, regardless of ability, could be successful. The students were encouraged to have fun with their work and think of it as an experiment. We discussed the fact that Picasso had a wonderful and sometimes bizarre sense of humor. All of my students know that the rules of my classroom prohibit making fun of any one in any way. They kept their sense of humor within the context of the Picasso style they chose to use. Every one of my students completed the project and was exceptionally successful not only in my eyes, the eyes of other teachers and administrators, but more importantly, in their own eyes.

During a recent visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art I had the opportunity to see the current Ancient Egyptian exhibit. As I was looking at a scale representation of the pyramids as compared to the Met, I thought about how students could use the same skills using proportions to make sculptures or architectural models. Computer technology could be used to develop sculptural and/or architectural ideas, which would further satisfy Learning Standards for the Arts #1, #2 and #4. Learning this skill would show students the way architects develop plans for buildings and would have application possibilities to the 'real' world.

Another way of expanding upon this learning experience is to have the students do a comparative analysis of artists of the same time period, and then draw conclusions regarding their use of proportion based upon observation and investigation. Students would write about their conclusions and substantiate their position with the body of evidence they collected. They then could select one of those artists as inspiration for a painting or drawing.