



Designing Social Change: Inquiry-Based Teaching in Graphic Design

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Abstract

This paper presents inquiry-based graphic design projects and teaching, and the resultant curricular model that examines how graphic design can be used to instigate positive social change in high school youth. During this year long project the author worked as a change agent in service to a partnership of non-profit after-school arts programs in Providence, Rhode Island who are organized as an entity called the Providence Youth Arts Collaborative (PYAC).

The intention of this project was two-fold. The main effort was to investigate ways graphic design could be used to spark curiosity and empower youth to make positive choices with their free time after school, such as enrolling in a PYAC member Arts program. The second aspect was to use graphic design to strengthen the visual identity of the PYAC in order to achieve the aforementioned effort.

The design processes and outcomes are presented as models of civically engaged art and graphic design teaching for high school and college levels that cultivate student awareness of the social power of visual communication. Systems thinking and theoretical models of social change are discussed in support of the intentions of this project.