Integrating the Arts:
Pre-Service Elementary Teachers Make African Masks of Six Cultures

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This paper provides a model of a scaffolded major project from an arts-integrated social studies curriculum unit. The unit involved an extended collaboration between instructors and pre-service teachers of three social studies methods classes, with the elementary teachers and students of three primary classes at a university laboratory school who were participating in an integrated unit on Africa. Pre-service teachers first created masks of six distinct African cultures (Bembe, Yoruba, Maasai, Bamana, Luba, and Chokwe) in their university methods class and then supported primary students creating similar masks during a practicum experience. Through making these masks and other unit activities, the pre-service teachers taught students about the diverse cultures, customs, and geographical settings of several African ethnic groups. Although arts-integration was challenging for pre-service teachers, as most lacked experience with three-dimensional papier-mâché construction, the planning talent of the Talents Unlimited model provided a framework to scaffold the complex work. A detailed mask-making plan created by pre-service teachers based on this framework is provided for readers interested in replicating the project, along with photographs and written descriptions of the completed African masks.

Keywords: Arts-integration, Africa, Masks, Elementary students, Integrated unit, Culture, Planning talent, Pre-service teachers, Social studies methods, Talents Unlimited, Thinking Skills
Introduction

The drive for improved test scores prompted largely by the No Child Left Behind Act passed by Congress in 2001 has resulted in a narrowing of curriculum, particularly in elementary schools (Center on Education Policy, 2008; Levine, Lopez, & Marcelo, 2008). In an effort to raise student test scores, school districts have focused instruction on subject areas emphasized on standardized tests, namely language arts and mathematics, largely neglecting other subject areas such as science, social studies, and the arts (Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Johnson, Cayot Serriere, & Stewart, 2008; Center on Education Policy, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006; Graham & Neu, 2004; Kozol, 2005; Pace, 2007; VanFossen, 2005; von Zastrow & Janc, 2004).

Although the arts are disappearing from many American schools, other countries are acknowledging their value. Sweden redesigned its arts program in recognition of its importance for developing student well being, while Japan uses the arts to emphasize craftsmanship in school in anticipation of later excellence in the workplace (Lindstrom, 1997). Julia Marshall (2005) points to three ways in which arts-integration is sound pedagogy: (1) the arts involve making connections between ideas using analogies; (2) the arts allow students to reorganize and reinterpret their knowledge, enhancing knowledge transfer; and (3) the arts spark creative thinking. Two recent studies addressed arts-integrated social studies programs. Liora Bresler and Margaret Latta (2009) involved upper elementary Australian students in a “Community harmony”-focused project in which students visited art galleries and practiced sketching, devised a rap dance, and performed a shadow puppet play, among participating in other various artwork activities that included peer-teaching. The students showed significant improvement in self-confidence, self-esteem, and leadership, along with discrete outcomes in the arts. In an innovative project from the United States, Allen Trent and Jorge-Ayn Riley (2009) implemented an arts-integrated unit with urban fourth graders from Denver. The lessons focused on privacy as one of the foundations for democracy. They found students intensely engaged in the work that successfully supported learning of all targeted content. Students also exhibited a high degree of transfer of concepts studied in the unit to their own lives. Additionally, in a descriptive article, Nick Viglione (2009) described a successful Pennsylvania alternative charter school with arts-integrated programs for academically and behaviorally at-risk students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The infusion of arts allowed students to reduce frustration, maintain healthier relationships, and express themselves through creativity.

In the current educational landscape, for successful, innovative arts-integration programs like those just mentioned to become widespread, it is crucial that teacher educators engage pre-service teachers in integrated learning experiences involving the arts. Many factors hinder teachers from using integrated curricula, among them are lack of experience with integrated curricula (Virtue, Wilson, & Ingram, 2009), lack of vision of the integrated whole (Wallace, Sheffield, Rénnie, & Venville, 2007), and lack of an appropriate theoretical framework (Park, 2008). Low valuation of the arts by some because this subject-area is not addressed by standardized tests, fear of the arts by those with little experience or artistic skill, lack of time and materials, and an attitude that the arts are not content rich enough are additional hindrances.

By modeling arts-integration in classes, showing how such a unit is developed, scaffolding complex components, and discussing the theoretical underpinnings, teacher educators can support pre-service teachers in active participation and consideration of the ways in which the arts can enhance content area
learning. This paper explores an example arts-integrated curriculum unit in a pre-service elementary social studies methods course with an accompanying field experience that occurred during the regularly-scheduled class time. In the arts-infused social studies practicum experience, pre-service teachers in three elementary social studies methods classes partnered with three primary classes at an on-campus elementary school who were involved in an integrated unit on Africa. The pre-service teachers first made masks themselves during their methods coursework, and then assisted the elementary students in creating masks of six distinct African cultures during the field experience. Through making masks and other unit activities, the pre-service teachers taught students about the diverse cultures, customs, and geographical settings of these ethnic groups. While our companion article in Social Studies Research and Practice (Volume VI, Issue 1, March, 2011), titled, “Reflections of pre-service elementary teachers after learning about an African culture through mask-making,” addresses pre-service teacher beliefs and experiences regarding the project, this article provides a practical overview of the stages of the project and, in particular, the detailed steps of making the masks. The Talents Unlimited Thinking Skill of Planning (Schlichter & Palmer, 1993, 2002) is used here to organize and analyze the steps in the mask-making process. It is hoped that the ideas and examples presented here, in light of the current educational climate, prompt additional research and practice on the powerful potential for stronger intersections between the arts and social studies education.

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Project Overview

A few months prior to the start of this project, we began talking with three first- and second-grade classroom teachers at our university laboratory school to find a way in which we could involve our pre-service teachers in the social studies lessons planned for their classrooms. Because the teachers had chosen an integrated unit on Africa as a focus for two months, we collaborated to develop an arts-integrated series of social studies lessons on six different African ethnic groups. Several of these lessons centered on students learning about and making masks incorporating features of traditional masks of these six cultural groups. We chose masks because they embody so much of an ethnic group’s culture, beliefs, and traditions. During ceremonies, a mask was used as “a powerful and mysterious instrument with which the masked individual cancelled his human nature to acquire a supernatural one, to give life to immaterial forces which could exercise social control at the service of the community” (Bassani, 2005, p. 324). By examining the environment, lifestyles, and customs of an African ethnic group, identifying ways these are reflected in mask features and ceremonial use, and then making a mask with self-chosen authentic features, we thought students could experience and better understand some aspects of African culture. Table 1 shows the six African cultures our students explored and the recurring features of some of their masks.
### Table 1

**Mask Features of the Six Different African Cultural Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mask Feature or Characteristic</th>
<th>Cultural Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Original material</strong></td>
<td>Bembe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carved Wood</td>
<td>Carved Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General shapes</strong></td>
<td>Ovoid, animal head shaped (antelope), flat tablet, or shield shaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representation</strong></td>
<td>Ancestral or animal spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coloration</strong></td>
<td>Brown, black, and yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eyes</strong></td>
<td>Several sets of eyes arranged vertically may be present; often large yellow disks with almond-shaped upper eyelid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mouth</strong></td>
<td>Small and often pierced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decoration and appendages</strong></td>
<td>Yellow raffia hair or mane; bands of colored triangles; incised geometric lines with lighter coloring; antelope horns may be present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The primary goal of pre-service teacher participation in the project was to model a long-term, authentic arts-integrated unit that involved pre-service teachers first in preparing teaching materials and making an example mask, followed by teaching unit lessons to first and second-grade students. The second goal of this project for all participants was to promote cultural awareness by focusing on the often overlooked, yet rich ethnic traditions of the diverse geographical regions of the African continent. The following sections detail the way in which the project was organized and executed in both the university and elementary school settings.

Pre-service Teacher Mask Making

Prior to introducing the specific African cultures on which the unit focused, we introduced the unit with an electronic slide presentation and set of learning centers that allowed students to understand the diversity of Africa. The slide show presented several maps and images of the African continent with an overview of countries, general topographic/climatic regions, linguistic diversity, and urban areas with their populations compared to large American cities. The four learning centers focused on (1) the geographic size of Africa as compared to the United States; (2) historical and current issues related to colonization of African regions; (3) children’s literature by African authors; and (4) personal narratives and artifacts from African exchange students. Then, we spoke about the importance of arts-integration and long-term projects for elementary students, connecting these ideas to state and national standards (standards related to the project are discussed in the companion paper).

Pre-service teachers in each section of elementary social studies methods were divided into six groups of approximately four people, with each group of students focusing on one of the six cultural groups from Africa, namely the Bembe, Yoruba, Maasai, Bamana, Luba, or Chokwe. The pre-service teachers first viewed six sets of mask cards we created. Each set addressed the masks of one group of people and contained 12 cards that showed a color photograph of an example mask on one side and facts about mask symbols or ceremonial practices on the reverse. Following classroom work with our mask cards, pre-service teachers each created a set of 12 cards that provided images and facts related to another aspect of their assigned African group’s culture or environment by researching information using Internet websites (See Web-based Resources). These card sets featured images of the group’s food traditions, clothing, housing, landforms, occupations, and local flora or fauna. The card fronts and backs were drawn in PowerPoint with four rectangles drawn on a slide (page). A photograph from the Internet (with its URL placed below it in a text box) was imported and re-sized to fit each rectangle for the card fronts, while a text box was inserted into the rectangles for recording the facts on the back. The card front images were printed in color and glued to somewhat-larger colored cardstock or mat board rectangles to form framed cards. The card backs were glued to the reverse sides to complete them. Pre-service teachers shared the information on the cards through classification activities involving the cards (i.e., sorting into dichotomous groups, sorting by themes, forming a series with a few cards, placing cards on a Venn diagram) during the methods classes in preparation for later teaching of primary grade students.

Next, we led pre-service teachers in creating a mask that was characteristic of the masks of their particular cultural group. The pre-service teachers worked on this task during class time over four class sessions. Each pre-service teacher created his/her own mask because that experience would inform later work with the elementary students and produce a useful example mask. Pre-service teachers worked in their assigned cultural groups...
providing support or helpful tips to one another. In the first 50-minute mask making session, pre-service teachers glued (with white craft glue) torn pieces of recycled copy paper onto an inflated balloon to make the mask shell. If they were not able to finish gluing the required three layers of paper on the balloon in class, they were asked to complete this at home.

In the second class session, pre-service teachers cut the balloon shell in half in the way necessary for the chosen mask style, creating a total of two mask shells each, one of which they later gave to an elementary student for the practicum mask-making work. Following this, they used a pair of sunglasses to position the eyes on the center of each of the mask shells and then drew and cut out the dime-sized eye holes. Additionally, they sketched their plans for their finished mask (each plan showing at least five authentic characteristics) and began modeling features. Because of limited field experience time with elementary students, the Luba mask group worked on the rims of their two mask shells, and the Maasai group created the basic headpieces on both of their mask shells. During the third class session, pre-service teachers completed modeling the features and applied a thick coat of white gesso paint to strengthen the mask shells and to form a base for the colored paint. A few students were able to start painting with color acrylic paints at this time. In the fourth and final mask making class session, pre-service teachers completed the color painting and added additional decorations such as raffia, glued-on beads, or shells.

Pre-service Teacher’s Completed Masks

Figures 1-6 show images of the masks completed by pre-service teachers. These images exemplify the rich cultural diversity among these six African cultures and highlight the ways in which the arts can support social studies education. These figures show that pre-service teachers were able to successfully complete the project, portraying the gestalt, intricate details, and colorful elements of each culture’s masks. Although many pre-service teachers initially expressed concern that they would not be able to model the features so that the finished product looked like the examples they viewed, they all were able to complete a mask with authentic features.

Figure 1 shows eight masks made by pre-service teachers in the Bembe style. The large eye sockets are evident in all the masks, as well as appropriate colors. The faces are elongated and two have a shield shape. Several show trim with alternately–colored triangle patterns. All feature the almond-shaped upper eyelids.
Figure 2 shows masks in the style of the Yoruba people. All pre-service teachers shaped their masks to sit on the head like a hat with a low brim over the forehead. Veils were added later after these photographs were taken. One mask features a crown, while another shows a rainbow arch. All have a snake and one has birds. The facial features mimic those of example masks with accentuated lips and wide eyes.

giraffes. Many show details such as animal body patterns or geometric designs and braids alongside the face.

Figure 3 presents seven masks in the Maasai style with pierced and decorated headpieces and red or red-brown coloration. Five masks portray “kissing” couples (busts of a man and a woman facing each other to represent marital harmony), while several display elephants or

![Figure 2](image1.png)

**Figure 2**
*Photographs of Yoruba Style Masks Made by Pre-service Teachers*

![Figure 3](image2.png)

**Figure 3**
*Photographs of Maasai Style Masks Made by Pre-service Teachers*
Figure 4 displays eight masks in the Bamana style. All feature horns numbering from four to seven with odd numbers of horns indicating masculinity and even numbers of horns femininity. They all have large noses, which the Bamana believe represent the center of emotional feeling (as the heart symbolizes in Western society). Pistachio shells on one mask represented cowry shells. All horns were decorated with patterns. The wide-open eyes, large ears, and small mouths indicate that the young male initiates wearing the masks should quietly watch and listen.

Figure 5 shows eight masks made by pre-service teachers in the style of the Luba people. All feature the distinct circular shape along with metallic and beaded decoration. Several show crests indicating masculinity. The round eyes are accentuated by beading or paint.

Six masks made by pre-service teachers in the Chokwe style are presented in Figure 6. These masks represent model female spirits. The eyes open to a slit indicating that dead ancestors watch through these masks. Many
feature beaded, braided hair and geometric scarification patterns indicating beauty.

Figure 6
Photographs of Chokwe Style Masks
Made by Pre-service Teachers

Mask Making with Primary Grade Students

Each of the three sections of pre-service teachers was paired with one of the elementary classes. The three sections of elementary social studies methods met with their corresponding elementary class during their scheduled 50-minute university class times, which coincided with the negotiated social studies times of the elementary classes. Considering that the laboratory school was just a few short blocks from the university classroom, little travel time was required, making the timing feasible. In each of the elementary classes, students were divided into six groups that were matched with the six cultural groups pre-service teachers had previously formed. On the first class session, pre-service teachers showed the students the cards they made of information related to the lifestyles, environment, or culture of their African group. They read the information on the cards to the students as needed and supported the students sorting the cards into categories in different ways. They presented the mask cards the instructors had made and asked the elementary students to identify recurring features of the masks. Then the pre-service teachers showed their group of students their completed masks and pointed out defining characteristics related to their African cultural group.

On the second class session, the elementary students began planning their masks and identified the five characteristics of the mask they intended to make, noting how these characteristics connected to the African cultural group. To encourage creative expression and ownership, students were allowed to incorporate their own ideas into the masks as long as the mask showed five authentic features from their assigned cultural group; students were strongly discouraged from “copying” a model mask exactly. Upon making these decisions, elementary students were given a mask shell and began forming the three-dimensional features of their masks with crumpled or folded recycled copy paper or cardboard and white craft glue. During the third class session, pre-service teachers helped students finish the three-dimensional features of their masks, glue down any rough edges, and paint the mask with a layer of gesso. At the fourth class session, elementary students painted the base colors of their mask. Afterward, they enjoyed the pre-service teachers’ presentation of an African legend of their cultural group through reader’s theater, puppets, big books, or active storytelling with sound effects and hand/body movements. The elementary students then re-told the story using the same materials/actions. Throughout the fifth and sixth class sessions, elementary students finished painting color details on their
masks, added ornamentation to their masks such as shells or beads, and glued five items inside of the mask to demonstrate what they learned about their African cultural group. These items included a selection of the following: map of Africa with the cultural group’s country colored, the name of the cultural group written by the student with a marker or crayon, along with drawings of different animals in the area, the vegetation and landforms of the area, and traditional foods, clothing, or crafts of the cultural group. As a culminating celebration at the seventh class session, each group of elementary students presented their masks to the class, telling about the important mask features and symbolism in addition to the customs and lifestyles of their ethnic group.

Planning Talent

Two factors make arts-integration in social studies particularly difficult for current traditional-aged pre-service teachers: (1) many pre-service teachers did not experience extensive, authentic arts education as students (Rule, Lockhart, Darrah, & Lindell, 2010); and (2) beginning teachers often rely on their “apprenticeship of observation” to guide their instructional decisions (Britzman, 2003; Lortie, 1975). The pre-service teachers in our classes had experienced social studies in a direct-instruction, text-based manner and expressed skepticism and anxiety when first introduced to this multipart mask-making project. Therefore, we asked, “How can we, as teacher educators, best help pre-service teachers learn to organize and execute a complex arts-integrated project?” The most appropriate response may be to support pre-service teachers by making a “plan” that explicitly defines the goal, materials and equipment, procedures, possible problems, and solutions of the project in a step-by-step manner. Creating such a plan scaffolds pre-service teacher learning (Jensen & Kiley, 2005). A detailed plan helps pre-service teachers not only anticipate problems that they or their students may encounter, but also encourages them to mentally prepare for and understand the steps of the project, thus setting them up for success regarding future arts-integrated endeavors.

The Talents Unlimited model talent area of “planning” (Schlichter & Palmer, 1993, 2002) provides a framework for guiding pre-service teachers through this planning phase. Talents Unlimited is a research-based model for teaching thinking skills that centers on five talent areas, namely productive thinking, decision making, planning, forecasting, and communication, along with the traditional “academic” talent. The goal of the planning talent is “to design a means for implementing an idea by describing what is done, identifying the resources needed, outlining a sequence of steps to take, and pinpointing possible problems of the plan” (Schlichter & Palmer, 1993, p. 96). There are five parts to making a plan according to this model, specifically: (1) telling what the plan is for; (2) recording materials and equipment needed to carry out the plan; (3) listing the steps and putting them in order; (4) verbally determining possible problems; and (5) making changes or adding steps to the plan to solve the problems. This model was used to assist pre-service teachers in conceptually planning and analyzing the mask making process. Thinking of possible problems and discussing their solutions helped pre-service teachers feel more confident in their work and helped the novice mask-makers perform more competently.

As pre-service teachers constructed their mask shells, the instructor asked them to articulate the steps while she recorded them in a Word file with the title, “Plan for making a papier-mâché mask shell” projected on a screen in the classroom. Each time new materials or equipment were used, they were added to the plan. Similarly, the instructor paused the students every once in a while and asked them to tell any problems they had encountered or possible pitfalls they had
skillfully avoided. These were added to the plan in bold text. The electronic file of this plan of making the mask shell was distributed to pre-service teachers as a model. Then, after they had completed their painted masks, pre-service teachers were asked to work together in their groups to construct the remainder of the plan for making a mask in the style of their African group. The last section of this article shows the combined plans that the pre-service teachers developed during mask making. It is important to note that the steps of the plan are shown in order and that the last two steps of the planning talent (thinking of possible problems and making changes to the plan to solve them) have been combined and are shown within the plan with bold text. Readers may use this plan as both a general example of the Talents Unlimited Planning Talent and as a detailed set of guidelines for how to replicate the mask making with pre-service teachers and/or K-12 students. The elementary students participating in this project were highly engaged in the arts-integrated activities, completing skillful masks with authentic features. During the final lesson, they were able to articulate how the environment affected the lifestyles and culture of the people they studied and how these aspects were reflected in the masks. It is our hope that our pre-service teachers, inservice teachers, and social studies teacher educators take a stand against the pervading standardized testing culture of single subject-focused, text-based direct instruction and drill, instead aiming to teach the whole child by integrating creative arts projects similar to the one presented here into the curriculum. Our companion article titled, “Reflections of pre-service elementary teachers after learning about an African culture through mask-making,” shows how pre-service teachers lacking experience in such projects can be encouraged through participation in such a project with a practicum component to use arts-integrated instruction with their future students. We hope more social studies instructors model these projects with pre-service teachers so that new teachers enter the field ready to motivate and enrich students by integrating the arts into social studies.

**Plan for Making Papier-mâché Masks of Six Different African Cultures**

Part I of the plan that follows tells how to make the initial papier-mâché covered balloon. The papier-mâché technique used here is simply torn pieces of recycled paper covered with white craft glue. This technique is relatively simple, not very messy, and produces a very sturdy, professional-looking product that will not attract insects or decay with time. After you have completed the steps of that part of the plan, determine the type of mask you wish to make and follow the corresponding steps in Part II that follow.

**What:** Making a papier-mâché mask with authentic features of an African culture

**Materials and Equipment:**
- Large latex ovoid-shaped (egg-shaped) balloon
- White craft glue – probably 4 to 8 ounces
- Recycled copy paper with printing on one side – 20 sheets or more
- Balloon hand pump for inflating balloons (or inflate by mouth instead)
- Sponge and water to clean tables
- Scissors to snip some glue bottle types (Aleene’s glue bottles but not Elmer’s)
- Plastic bag to carry wet paper-covered balloon (if transport is needed)
- String or curling ribbon to suspend balloon to dry
- Pencil or pen
- Scissors
- Paint brushes in a variety of sizes
• Gesso paint (thick, white acrylic undercoating medium)
• Acrylic paints
• Paint shirts or old clothes to wear to protect clothing
• Drop cloths to cover tables, perhaps floor
• Cardboard (from recycled cereal or other food boxes)
• Images of this culture’s masks from Internet searches
• Eyeglasses or sunglasses for drawing eyeholes for most masks
• Glass seed beads (for Luba masks)

Steps (in order):

Part I: Making the papier-mâché mask shell

1. Inflate a balloon about the size of a human head – perhaps a little larger. Tie the end with a knot.

   Wear washable clothing or an apron in case glue gets on clothes. Additionally, you may want to place a piece of recycled paper in your lap to protect your slacks. Make sure your glue bottle is open.

2. Take five sheets of recycled paper – tear in half, tear in half again, tear in half again so you have eighths. Place a couple of sheets on table to protect it from glue drips or use a drop cloth.

   Hold one piece (1/8 sheet) of paper in your left hand (if you are right handed). Outline it with a line of glue. Then squiggle back and forth across the paper to cover it with squiggles. Repeat in the other direction to take care of any empty areas. If the glue drips from the paper, close the glue bottle part so that the glue flow is restricted or don’t apply so much. If the glue won’t come out of the bottle, unclog the bottle with a paper clip or toothpick or by picking off the layer of dried glue with your fingernails.

3. Place the pieces of paper with glue on them around the equator of the balloon. Twist the paper somewhat as you press it to the balloon to smear the glue. Overlap pieces by about a half-inch (about one centimeter).

4. After completing the equator, work on a pole until half of the balloon is covered. Then do the other end so that one complete layer has been applied. Allow the knotted end of the balloon to extend out of the papier-mâché. This end will be used later for hanging the balloon to dry. Place the paper right up to the knot – do not leave a large empty area. Try to keep one hand on the balloon to hold it steady as pieces are applied. If the glue bottle is hard to squeeze, make the top opening larger.

5. After the first layer is complete, carefully check and smooth the paper layer on the balloon, gluing down any parts that stick up. Be sure to keep sharp objects away from the balloon and have extra balloons available in case one breaks.

6. If your hands get glue-covered, rub them over the trashcan. Do not allow rolls of dried glue to fall on the floor or rug, as any dampness will cause them to adhere. Alternatively, you can wash your hands intermittently or keep a wet paper towel at your table for wiping hands.

7. After the first layer is complete, begin a second layer. Turn the paper over to expose the recycled print so you can easily see what is the first and what is the second layer.

   You might want to use a piece of recycled paper to protect the table from glue drips. If it becomes sticky with glue, put another piece of paper on top of it.
8. Then add the third layer. When it is complete, smooth the paper and check for any loose flaps. Glue them down.


10. Be sure to put your name on your balloon shell so that it is not mixed up with the work of others. Hang it to dry by tying a string or ribbon to the knotted end of the balloon and attach the string to a tall object such as a coat tree. If this is not possible, lay the papier-mâché-covered balloon on a piece of paper to dry.

11. Remember not to keep the papier-mâché covered balloon in an extremely hot place like a closed car in the sun, because the balloon will expand and ruin the shell. It is best to apply all three layers of papier-mâché to the balloon in one session.

12. Put a wet paper-covered balloon in a plastic bag to transport it.

13. Allow the papier-mâché covered balloon to dry overnight. Then decide which of the six cultures your mask will depict. Find the plan for the mask of that culture in one of the following six plans and follow it.

**Part 2: Finishing the Mask in the style of one of six African Cultures**

14. Make sure the white glue in the papier-mâché of the covered balloon is dry enough so that the shell will hold its shape when the balloon is cut.

15. Use one of the methods below to cut the hollow shell into two masks.

**For the Yoruba mask**, draw a line around the equator of the balloon to visualize how to draw the cut line. Next draw another line that crosses the equator in two places on opposite sides of the balloon. This line will be 2 inches (5 cm.) above on one side and 2 inches (5 cm.) below on the opposite side. Cut along the second line to produce two halves. Each half can become a different Yoruba mask. Yoruba masks sit on the top of the head like a hat and dip low over the forehead and eyes. If the balloon has not fallen out, pull it out of the mask half and throw the balloon pieces away. Try on the mask and add more paper to the front edge if it does not dip low enough. **If you find you have accidentally cut a part of the mask that should not have been cut, just put the edges back together with a line of glue on the raw edge and cover with glue-coated paper on both sides to repair the cut.**

For the Bembe, Bamana, Chokwe, and Maasai masks, draw a line from the North pole to the South pole of the balloon, using a pencil or pen, and continue this line around the other side of the balloon so that you have a circle through the poles. Take scissors and cut along the line to produce two equal halves. Each half can now be made into a separate mask. Once the balloon is cut into two halves, peel balloon from the papier-mâché, then discard the balloon.

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**Figure 7**
Drawing a Line around the Equator of the Balloon for Cutting
For the Luba mask, draw a line around the equator of the balloon. Using scissors, cut into the papier-mâché and cut along the equator until there are two halves produced. Each half will make a mask. Remove and throw away any remnants of the balloon. Luba masks are flatter and wider than the current mask shell; therefore, 2-inch (5 cm.) slits need to be cut around the perimeter of the shell at a 2-inch (5 cm.) spacing and these should be flattened out like petals around the center of the mask. Flatten them out against the table top. Then use glue-coated pieces of paper to bridge the gaps between the petals to make a smooth, continuous wide rim around the mask center. Cover both sides of this flat rim with glue-covered paper.

16. For all masks except the Yoruba mask, place a pair of eyeglasses or sunglasses with the arms folded inside the mask shell, in the middle of the face (equal distances from the top of the head to the chin and equal distances from eyeglass frames to sides of head). Next, trace the frames lenses of the glasses and draw an “X” where the eyes would be in the middle of the glasses. The teacher, not an elementary student, takes a dull pointed pair of scissors, and from inside of the mask, pushes the scissors with a grinding or twisting motion through the center of the “X” into the teacher’s cupped palm behind to make eyeholes about the size of a dime. For safety, make sure students know that they are not to try and punch out the eyeholes when someone’s face is in the mask! Twist scissors around to make the eyeholes larger. Sometimes wetting the eyehole area with water helps. Snip off any excess material that does not form a neat wall around the eyehole.

17. For all mask types, cover the inside of the mask shell with a layer of glued-down recycled paper. Fold paper over the edges of the mask to strengthen and smooth the edges. If there are any weak parts, patch over them. Make sure the inside of the mask shell is completely covered so no spots from the original paper and glue are showing. Let it dry. If you run out of paper, ask a friend if you might have some of his or hers.

18. Sketch a drawing of the way you would like your finished mask to look on a piece of paper. To help in this activity, find some photographs of the masks of the culture of interest from the Internet. Make your mask unique by combining features from different masks of the same culture. Refer to the Internet mask photos to help you in deciding paint colors, decorations, and other features.

19. Make the mask features.

To be sure that facial features turn out symmetrical, cut-out or form two facial features at a time so they are the same size and shape or cut one out and trace it to create the identical match. Cover facial features with small strips or patches of glue-coated paper and glue. Use additional glue-coated paper to “tape” the features to the mask. If the facial features will not stay in place or lay flat, have patience and hold down the piece for about two minutes. Then add more glue.
along the outside of the shape for extra security. Allow the glue to dry before proceeding further. If you are in a hurry, masks can be dried with a hair dryer or under a hand dryer such as those available in many school restrooms.

For the Yoruba mask, make two balls the size of marbles with glue-covered paper. Attach to masks for eyes. Twist a strip of paper to make a thick cord. Cut a segment of this and use for the upper eyelid. Use twisted-paper eye brows. Also form ears. Cover with glue and attach to the face. If features do not stick, have patience and hold them in place with some pressure for a few minutes. Decide what features will be on the top of the head. Often, masks have a crown or snake(s) or bird(s). You might want a combination of these features or additional features. To make a snake for the top of the head, attach two pieces of copy paper together with a line of glue down the side to make a larger sheet. Cover the paper with glue and roll it into a snake-body-sized cylindrical shape. Gently bend it into a coil and attach to the top of the mask. Use extra glue on the bottom of the snake to help it stick. Then place small strips of glue-coated paper along the edge of the snake to secure it. Press and poke so that the snake’s round body shape is still visible. Twist the tail of the snake to make it form a tapered end. Pinch and press the snake’s head to form it into shape. You may want to add a little more paper here. Attach a forked tongue. To make a crown, cut six triangular or tall pentagonal pieces from recycled cardboard and use glue-covered paper to cover them and form into a ring. Attach to the head with glue-covered paper strips. To make a bird, take a sheet of paper and cover it with glue. Crumple it onto a wad and pinch it to form a head and a body. Pinch and twist the head to form a beak. Cut two small wings from cardboard. Cover with glue-coated paper and use parts of attached paper to attach the wings to the bird’s body. Add small rolled balls of paper to bird’s head for eyes.

For the Bamana mask, make a large nose that represents the center of emotional feeling (similar to our thoughts about the heart). Take a strip of cardboard (about 3 inches (7.5 cm) wide and 6 inches (15 cm) long and fold in half, hotdog style. Cut the middle edge of the long nose in a slight arch to match the curve of the mask. Take a half of a sheet of recycled copy paper and cover it with glue. Lay the nose piece (unfolded) on top of the paper. Wrap the paper around the pieces to cover it, folding and crumpling any leftover paper inside the nose. Pinch it along its fold line to shape it into a three-dimensional nose. Use crumpled glue-covered pieces of paper to stuff the nose. Outline the edge of the paper-covered cardboard nose all the way around with glue. Place it on the mask. Use small pieces of glue-coated paper like tape to attach the nose all the way around. To make the nostrils, wad glue-covered paper to the size of marbles. Glue on to the lower end of the nose. The mouth is small and symbolizes the fact that boys undergoing initiation should listen rather than speak. Roll two one-eighth-sheet pieces of recycled paper covered with glue and form them into lip shapes. Glue the lip shaped pieces of paper on the lower half of the mask (where the mouth goes). The Bamana masks have large ears, symbolizing the need for the initiates to listen. Take a sheet of recycled paper and cover it with glue. Crumple it and uncrumple it until it is like dough. Shape it into a large ear and attach to the side of the mask. Do the same for the other ear. Make sure both ears are similar in shape and attached at the same level on the sides of the face so that the mask looks symmetrical. Cover the ears with small pieces of glue-covered recycled paper to smooth their appearance and securely attach them to the mask. Decide how many horns the mask will have. Most masks have from four to ten horns, but six or seven horns.
seem to occur most frequently. To make a horn, cut a rectangular piece of recycled cardboard approximately 2 by 8 inches (5 by 20 cm.). Roll it into a long cylinder and then flatten it and cover with glue. Roll it again so that it is 0.5 inches (1 cm.) in diameter. Cover with glue-coated recycled copy paper and allow to dry. Continue to do this for the desired number of horns. To attach the horns to the forehead, cut an equal number of X-shaped holes as the number of horns about 1-inch (2.5 cm.) from the edge of the mask on the top. Arrange these symmetrically. Push the bottom part of a horn through each hole so it protrudes about 0.5 inches (about 1 cm.). Cut four 0.5-inch (1 cm.) long slits on the bottom of the horn and flatten the horn bottom against the inside of the mask. Add glue to attach it securely. After all horns have been attached in this manner, cut two 4 by 8 inch (10 by 20 cm.) rectangles of cardboard. Bend the cardboard around the set of horns on the front and on the back side. Remove the cardboard and coat the inside with glue. Place it against the horns and stuff any empty spots with glue-coated copy paper. Use strips of glue-coated paper to smoothly attach this cardboard to the forehead.

For the Chokwe mask facial features, cut the following shapes from cardboard: Two 3.25 inch (8 cm.) outer diameter and two 2 inch (5 cm.) inner diameter circular eye rings, two 2.75 inch (7 cm.) by 1 inch (2.5 cm) hump-shaped (flattened semi-circle) upper eyelids, two 0.75 inch (2 cm.) by 2.5 inch (6 cm.) hump-shaped (flattened semi-circle) lower eyelids, two U-shaped cheek outlines cut from a circular ring approximately the size of the previous eye ring but stretched out a bit and with tapered ends, one upper lip approximately 3.25 inches (8 cm.) wide and 0.75 inches (2 cm.) high with tapered ends and two small humps near the top middle, one lower lip in a slightly bowed (dish-shaped) curve approximately 3.5 inches (9 cm.) wide and 0.5 inch (1 cm) high, and two semi-circular ears cut from a circle with a 2-inch (5 cm.) diameter. The teacher can make cardboard templates that the students can then trace. Label each template so it is not mistaken for a cut-out piece and used on a mask. The Chokwe masks represent beautiful women, so be sure that all facial features are symmetrical. Cut out the traced facial features using scissors. Then, take glue-covered white recycled copy paper and completely cover each facial feature. Bend excess paper to the back of the cutout. Cut off large amounts of excess paper. Glue the two eye rings onto the front of the mask. Make sure the eye rings are symmetrically placed on the mask; placed half-way between the top of the head and the chin and centered on the eyeholes. Glue-coated small wads or bits of paper can be added underneath the eye rings to raise them up on the mask. Put the two top eyelids and the two bottom eyelids onto the top of the eye rings. Bend each eyelid slightly, so it stands up off the mask. A small portion of the previously cut eye circle should be showing so the wearer can see through when wearing the mask. Don’t just bend the eyelids in the middle. Also, bend them on the sides, holding for about 30 seconds to a
minute. This helps to hold the bent area in place.

Add the nose. The nose should be added so that the smaller end is centered between the eyes/eye rings and the larger point is pointed toward the eventual placing of the mouth. Extra balls of paper should also be added to form the nostrils. **Apply pressure with your fingers for several minutes along each portion of the nose.** After the first coat of glue dries, more glue can be added and the above process repeated if some parts are still not sticking. After adding the nose, the upper lip and lower lip should be assembled on the mask. Both the upper and lower lip should be bent slightly to be raised off the mask. The two lip-humps on the top mouth part should face up, towards the nose. Don’t just bend the mouthparts in the middle. Also, bend them on the sides, holding for about 30 seconds to a minute. This helps to hold the bent area in place. Then, add the two ear pieces. The ear pieces should be symmetrically placed on the face, as well as directly across from the eyes. Attach a paper flap to each ear piece to fasten the ear more securely to the head. Finally, add the cheek rings underneath the eyes. These too should be symmetrically placed. Each cheek ring should look like a “u,” with the pointed ends flowing toward the eyes.

**For the features of a Maasai mask,** a large section of cardboard (a frozen pizza box or large cereal box) works well to make the flat headpiece part of the mask that extends above the top of the mask. Place the top of the mask so that it overlaps the bottom part of this cardboard. Trace the round arch from the papier-mâché mask shell onto the cardboard. Then draw a line below that arch that follows its shape to make a curved band about an inch wide. This band should be cut with 1-inch (2.5 cm.) slits to make tabs that will be glued against the inside edge of the papier-mâché mask shell to attach this part later.

Look at Internet images of Maasai masks and decide if your mask will show a couple facing each other (kissing mask) or animals from the savannah of Africa (leopards, giraffes, elephants). Draw or trace around cut-out animal clip art images to make the desired components on cardboard. There are cutaway areas along the edges of these images that will need to be removed from the cardboard. One can cut in from the edge and then patch the cardboard with little pieces of glued-on paper (patch on both sides) or one can fold the cardboard and cut a slit from the edge of the fold. Cut out this entire upper part of the mask, including the cutaway areas. Then use the tabs cut earlier to attach it to the papier-mâché mask base. **After gluing on the tabs, cover that area with pieces of glue-covered recycled copy paper.** Also, turn the mask to the front and glue pieces of paper over the joint between this top piece and the rest of the mask. This will anchor the top piece more securely. As you are working, lay the mask flat on the table and press the top part so that it also lies flat. It is not necessary to cover the cardboard top piece with glued-on paper, but doing so will result in a stiffer mask. One may want to glue some narrow strips of cardboard to the back side of the top piece to give it added strength. Form facial features adding eyelids, nose, and mouth. Cut these features out of cardboard and then place them on glue-covered paper. Wrap the paper around them and scrunch it up on the back side. Cut away excessive paper. Use glue to affix features to mask. Add braids along sides of the head (cut tabs as done for the top headpiece).

To make eyes for the Luba mask, form a circle with paper by twisting a glue-covered strip of it into a long line. **The paper is easier to work with if it has been crumpled and covered with glue.** Glue these newly formed circles around the outside of the cut eye-holes. If needed, use additional glue-coated paper pieces to keep the paper circle in place. Add the nose by cutting a long, narrow cardboard nose and covering it with glue-coated paper. Male masks have a crest; female masks do not.
Decide if the mask will be male or female. If male, create a glue-coated paper-wrapped cardboard crest that joins the top of the nose.

A mouth may also be created by covering a cardboard shape with glue-coated paper and attaching. Mouths are of various shapes – refer to Internet images of Luba masks and choose the mouth type that appeals to you. Additional details of triangles and other geometric shapes can be glued to the mask.

20. Let the mask features fully dry. **Run hand gently over the surface of the mask to make sure everything is securely attached.** If there are any loose parts or loose flaps of paper, glue them down. For all painting, be sure to work on a table covered by a drop cloth or other covering. You may also want a drop cloth on the floor to protect the floor or carpet. Apply white gesso paint to cover the mask with a base coat. **Be careful because this paint is permanent once dry and will stain carpet, floors, tables, and clothing.** Relax and brush in one direction; do not scrub with the brush. **Make sure that all areas are covered.** Ask a friend to check your mask with you to make sure you have not missed any places. Keep brushes wet and wash with warm, soapy water to completely remove the gesso when finished. Shape wet brush bristles gently with fingers so they dry into the best shape for future painting.

21. Refer to images of authentic African culture masks and choose appropriate colors for painting the mask. Take care with acrylic paint because once it dries, it is permanent. **For all painting, be sure to work on a table covered by a drop cloth, newspaper, or other covering.** Paint the inside of the mask a plain color.

Through making masks and other unit activities, the pre-service teachers taught students about the diverse cultures, customs, and geographical settings of these ethnic groups.
22. Later, glue on a label with the maker’s name and the type of mask. You may want to add additional documentation about the people of this culture such as glued-on images of a map of Africa showing the area in which they live, images of the people and their homes, animals of their region, etc.

23. Punch a hole at the top of the mask for hanging. You may want to tie a small piece of curling ribbon or string here to make a loop for suspending the mask from a nail or tack.

By examining the environment, lifestyles, and customs of an African ethnic group, identifying ways these are reflected in mask features and ceremonial use, and then making a mask with self-chosen authentic features, we thought students could experience and better understand some aspects of African culture.

Conclusion

Making masks with authentic features of African cultural groups was a highlight of the subject-integrated African unit of first and second graders and of the social studies and art-integrated lessons taught by preservice teachers to these elementary students. The foregoing plan for completing a papier-mâché mask of one of six African cultures, created in the college classroom as the masks were made, contained critical problem-solving strategies supplied by pre-service teachers. The carefully-organized approach to a complex art task helped all pre-service and elementary students achieve success. This scaffolded modeling of arts-integration into social studies lessons supported pre-service teachers in recognizing ways an art project can support and enhance content-area learning of culture.

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**Web-Based**


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To encourage creative expression and ownership, students were allowed to incorporate their own ideas into the masks as long as the mask showed five authentic features from their assigned cultural group; students were strongly discouraged from “copying” a model mask exactly.