

Partnering: Creative Career Exploration

by Eva K. Esrum

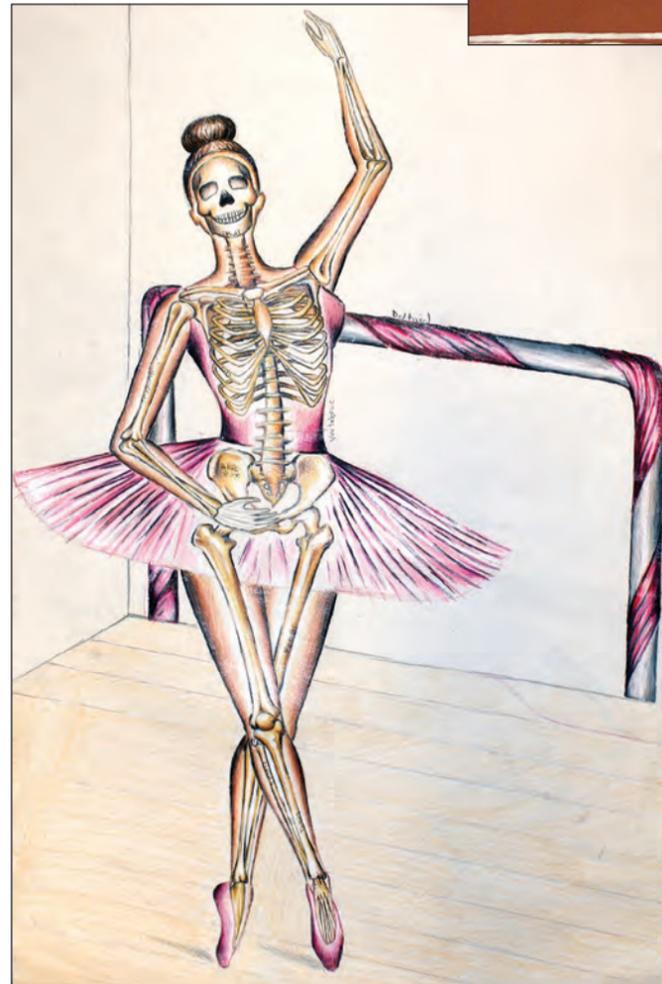
LEARNING OBJECTIVE

High-school students will ...

- learn about an art and non-art related profession.
- identify specific visual arts careers and describe the knowledge and skills that one needs for them.
- create art for a local business.
- be able to describe and illustrate basic knowledge of the advertising profession and of another profession practiced in the community.

NATIONAL ART STANDARDS

- **CREATING:** Conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work.
- **PRESENTING:** Interpreting and sharing artistic work.
- **RESPONDING:** Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.
- **CONNECTING:** Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.



- ▲ Proaxis Physical Therapy bought this painting by sophomore student, Charlotte—a great example of how hard work does pay off.
- ◀ This colored-pencil warm-up exercise, done by a junior, was labeled with the names of the bones and muscles involved.

I have seen firsthand how partnering with a business can have positive effects on my students, school and community. If you trust your ideas and students enough to take a leap of faith into unknown territory, the results can be overwhelmingly positive and far-reaching.

While going through physical therapy for an injury, I developed an idea for a project that could encompass career education, across-the-curriculum learning and real-life experiences. This could be done with any of a number of businesses or organizations, and on a variety of topics that reach across the curriculum.

Thanks to the generosity of Proaxis Physical Therapy of Simpsonville, S.C., our first project involved anatomy, physical therapy and advertising. We named it “The 2015 Proaxis Art Challenge,” and it benefited both our high school and Proaxis Physical Therapy.

HERE IS HOW IT ALL CAME TOGETHER: My students and I became an “Advertising Agency” of sorts, with students being the artists and I, their boss. Proaxis Physical Therapy was our client.

In setting up an interactive field trip for the students, Proaxis Clinic Director, James Murdock, arranged for his

Author Eva K. Esrum created this collage, > which features highlights of the project, memorabilia, and articles about it.

physical therapist in training, Kenny Palmer, and his clinical instructor, Jason Davenport, to be in charge of this part of the project. It was a perfect plan: Kenny needed a service project to fulfill a requirement for Duke University’s Doctor of Physical Therapy Program.

AN INTERACTIVE FIELD TRIP The day came for my advanced students to visit Proaxis. The first phase of the field trip included a lecture regarding the physical therapy profession and an overview on knee anatomy and pathology.

The second phase involved learning how to perform certain aspects of a functional-movement screening tool and gathering a sense of how physical therapists analyze movement to help make clinical decisions. Kenny and Jason demonstrated the movements and provided students with feedback on what they were observing. The room exploded with laughter as students practiced and critiqued each other.

AFTERWARDS, STUDENTS COMPLETED A REFLECTION EXERCISE. Senior Kaitlyn Willets stated, “I used to think that physical therapy was helpful even if it could be painful and hated. After watching the presentations, I now see physical therapy as a way of helping others and bringing people closer together for a stronger community.”

“I have been interested in becoming a physical therapist,” said Junior Ashley Hamada, “and since Kenny talked about the specialties, I am looking into the one pertaining to neurology.”

Almost every student said that his or her favorite parts of the presentation were when they were able to observe what actual physical therapists did, and when they were able to participate in the exercises and critique their classmates.

ADVERTISING SPECIFICATIONS. At the end of our field trip, James presented the specifications for the art he wanted my students to produce for a competition and display. Students were to illustrate bones and/or muscles and creatively incorporate them into compositions. A point of inspi-



ration was the Proaxis motto, “Don’t Just Recover. Conquer!” Size specifications were necessary to prevent students from making art too large to be framed or displayed. James offered a \$100 gift card for the piece that adjudicators would select as having best met the specifications.

Students developed ideas by researching anatomy and physical therapy in books and online. They used the art media we had available: tempera and acrylic paints, and colored pencils. As their “boss,” I encouraged them not to stray from client specifications and to remember that the

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images they created needed to appeal to both patients and physical therapists.

I also told them that others depend on them to meet deadlines and that it could affect their pay as well as the reputation of our ad agency if they did not.

"Having Proaxis as our client made this experience feel real," observed Israel Wright, a junior. *"It was important to me to finish my work on time and meet the specifications for it. If I didn't, I would have felt like I failed at my job."*

THE PRESENTATION. I delivered the students' finished work to James at Proaxis on Feb. 16, and he arranged for adjudication. He secured an orthopedic surgeon, an art educator, his superior and staff, and I arranged for my principal and several successful alumni artists to vote online.

Seven works were framed and hung in the clinic. The awards presentation occurred in March, with the student artists, parents and supportive colleagues attending. After James' eloquent speech about the the project, it was announced that Proaxis would be purchasing all seven of the artworks. The pride of the young artists and their parents was palpable.

Articles about the project appeared in two newspapers, and at the top of the Greenville County School District's website home page. It also became a topic at a Clemson University graduate class, School Improvement Committee meetings, a School District principal's meeting, amongst the Proaxis staff, their patients and even DHEC when inspecting the clinic.

GIVE PARTNERING A TRY This multifaceted learning experience has numerous far-reaching benefits for students and the community. If you are interested in partnering with a group or business within your community, share this article with them. When your "client-partners" thoroughly understand the concept and agree to participate, your students' lives will be enriched with career education, across-the-curriculum learning, and real-life experiences. ■

Eva K. Esrum teaches art at Hillcrest High School in Simpsonville, S.C.



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