

Life Cycles

Pam Stephens

In this continuing series of implementing Ernest Boyer's human commonalities as a theme for student-teaching, *Student-Teacher Survival Guide* explores the concept of experiencing the life cycles. In a broad sense, the life cycles refer to those events that all human beings experience. Regardless of time, place, or culture these basic events are birth, life, and death. In a narrower sense, the lives of students are a microcosm of the larger world with a focus on day-to-day events that are more egocentric, but universal within the microcosm. The life cycle of students, therefore, is not necessarily as profound as birth, life, and death, but the cycle is nonetheless important.



Jesse experiences the life cycle of a student-teacher as she teaches an art lesson to a third-grade student.

The Student Life Cycle

- All students experience a first day of school. While this is not as universal as birth, it is nonetheless a new start.
- All students experience the days in between the first and last days of school. Attending class, homework, tests, and socializing align with "life" for students.
- All students have a final day of classes. To most students this is a death of sorts. After dealing with the routine of schedules and study, leaving behind that which is familiar can be a frightening or exciting aspect of the last day of classes.

Creating Connections

As a student teacher, you can help your students connect to each other by leading them to see that their experiences, hopes, and fears are shared by others—including you!. Well-known artists such as Norman Rockwell (1894–1978) painted many scenes about this very topic. Help students make a connection with each other, by asking them to recall their very first day of school or the first day of the current school year. List

the experiences so that everyone can see them. Next, ask students to recall those experiences that make up their daily life at school. List these daily life experiences next to the first-day events.

Finally, ask students to think about the last day of the school year. What experiences or emotions do they recall? List these experiences next to the others.

What experiences do students have in common? What experiences are unique? Use this information to connect to Rockwell's artwork about school. Although the Rockwell images are dated by the styles of clothing, hairstyles, and school-room paraphernalia, the images communicate messages that are not unlike those that contemporary students encounter or have encountered. Encourage students to find details within the artwork that communicate experiences that are similar to their own.

To extend the lesson, help students use the image search function of search engines to find artworks by other artists that communicate about the life cycles of school.

Another option is to ask students to create a diorama that shows their progression through the life cycle of a school year.

As a Student Teacher

As a student teacher, take this opportunity to reflect upon your own life cycle as a student in a teacher preparation program. What do you remember about the first day of your program? What events or experiences do you recall about your daily life as an art education student? What was the first day of student-teaching like? If you have completed your student teaching, what did the final day feel like? How can you keep these memories alive through a work of art? 🎨

References

The following artworks by Rockwell are readily accessible online and are recommended as a starting point:
First Day of School
Happy Birthday, Miss Jones
The Tomboy

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