



A student uses the syllabus to reflect on her work.

### Syllabus Outline

- Title of Assignment
- Grade Level and Type of Activity
- Medium Used
- Vocabulary and Definitions
- Historical/Cultural Background
- Creative Problem
- Practice
- Note to Parents to include standards addressed by the lesson and suggestions for how to talk about the assignment with children.

# School-to-Home Connection

## Using a Syllabus to Communicate Art Learning

**Kathy Marron**

In the not-too-distant past I was somewhat hesitant to send home my students' artwork. My fear did not stem from worry that the artwork was below par; rather, my worry was that some of my students' parents might not fully understand the depth and breadth of learning that was involved in production of the art. To parents, a child's artwork might represent a "pretty" picture; but I knew there was so much more substance involved. I began to contemplate how to bridge the school-to-home communication gap, and how to express to parents the significance of each art lesson. At last I came up with a successful solution and implemented it last fall.

### Shared Learning Syllabus

The solution was simple. I began to write a syllabus for each art lesson and send it home with each completed artwork. The syllabus is a double-sided, half-page paper that informs parents about art learning.

Included in the overview are:

- goals and objectives
- state and national standards
- a brief lesson description with a statement of the creative problem students were required to solve
- vocabulary and definitions
- media used
- technique (how the artwork was made)
- practice (what was worked on in class)
- extended learning (Web sites, books, and videos).

### Positive Response and Benefits

Feedback from parents, teachers, and administrators was immediate. Parents said that they loved the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion about art with their children. Some classroom teachers found

a new respect for the art program. Administrators appreciated the positive connection it made with the home and community about what was taking place in the artroom.

Through use of the syllabus, art learning has been extended beyond my classroom environment.

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Art concepts are reinforced to students and introduced to parents. A remarkable and direct result of this school-to-home connection is an elevation of art to a stature equal to other classroom disciplines. As technology advances on our campus, I plan to expand the syllabus and include it on the art Web site alongside student artwork, thus expanding the reach of art learning beyond the boundaries of our school and community. 

*Kathy Marron is an art specialist in the Flagstaff Unified School District in Flagstaff, Arizona.*

# Milagros

5th-Grade Multicultural Appreciation Study

**Parents and Guardians,** This lesson was designed to meet Arizona Academic Standards for the Visual Arts: 1AV-E1 through E5; 2AV-E1, E3, E4; 3AV-E1, E3, E5, E7 AND National Content Standards for the Visual Arts: 3 and 4.

It would be beneficial to your child's art education if you would take a few minutes to discuss their artwork with them. Reviewing the vocabulary words and concepts will reinforce learning. Displaying your child's artwork boosts their appreciation of art because it communicates value. I hope you will enjoy and appreciate, as I do, the great deal of thought and problem solving that your child has put into creating this beautiful piece of art. Enjoy!

—Ms. Marron, *Art Specialist*

**Medium:** Aluminum Tooling Foil, Permanent Markers, Poster Board, Glitter

**Vocabulary:** Milagros, Aluminum Tooling Foil, Embossing (creating a raised surface)

**Historical/Cultural Background:** *Milagros* is the Spanish word for "miracle". Milagros are a votive charm traditionally used by Catholic Hispanics for the purpose of making petition and expressing thankfulness to the saints (Santos) who have intervened on their behalf. For common populations, milagros were fashioned out of cheap metals, carved wood, or stamped by Hispanic folk artists. For the more wealthy populations, milagros were sometimes fashioned out of gold by Hispanic jewelers. Milagros are very sincere folk art, on sale throughout the country in city shops and in the sidewalk stands outside the poorest churches. Once purchased, the milagros are pinned to the clothing of Santos, statues of saints displayed in the churches. The milagro represents a petition or request for a need, healing, finances, crops, fishing, etc. Often times, after a request has been answered, another milagro expressing thankfulness is pinned to the Santos. Greece, Guatemala, India, Morocco, and Iran also have a history of using milagros. In recent times, petitions for needs have changed from basic needs to more materialistic requests for possessions like fancy TVs, Cadillacs, jewelry, or wealth. Milagros are also used for secular or decorative purposes and as such are referred to as *dijes*.

**Creative Problem:** Design and create an aluminum tooling foil "Milagro" which symbolically expresses something for which they are personally thankful.

**Practice:** This project took four art classes to complete. Students were first introduced to milagros and their traditional use. Students discussed as a group the application of the concept of thankfulness to their own lives. After the teacher modeled the creative process, students were instructed to develop a milagro design using a symbol to represent something for which they are thankful. As part of their design, students had to include the Spanish word for their symbol. Once their design was finished on paper, students transferred the design to tooling foil by embossing with a pencil. Additional embossing, color application, the addition of a poster board backing for stability, and a touch of glitter (optional) completed the "milagro".