

Session 14 Transcript: Lauralee Chambers

- Hello everyone, my name is Lauralee Chambers and I'm feeling really fortunate to be presenting today at the Arts Integration and STEAM Conference. I'm guessing since we're both sitting here together right now, we have a lot in common. First, our love of art. Second our love of teaching and learning. The other thing I know for sure is that we have also faced some tremendous challenges in the past several months and I hope that you are healthy and well. I'm really glad that you're here. Yes, we've faced undeniable adversity and continual change. Luckily, as educators, we are resourceful and resilient. We know how to adapt and adjust and we have used our own creativity to reach our children in very new ways. I'm really proud of you and I thank you for your dedication and work and doing what's best for our children with so much change in the world, my hope is that the one constant for you in all of this uncertainty is the importance of the arts in your own life. I know for me, expressing myself in my own art practice is absolutely a key to reducing anxiety and bringing balance to my life. The arts touch not just our hands, and our minds, but our hearts. They are what makes us human. There is extensive research on the benefits, numerous benefits of our education and we can all agree that the arts cross through every single content area, making learning more meaningful and memorable. Our children are getting transferable skills every time they come into that art room that they can use for whatever job they can imagine in the future. In addition to all of this, what we've recently seen across the globe is the unique capacity of the arts to connect people. The arts provide a language that transcends race, religion, age, ability, and even distance. Creativity and innovation are the keys to keeping up with all the change in our lives. So now, a little bit about me. I have had the honor and privilege of teaching elementary art for the past 26 years in Westchester, New York. I am at two schools every single day. I begin my mornings with third, fourth, and fifth graders teaching there, prepping for the next day, cleaning up, racing out, traveling to my second school where I do K, first, and second grade in the afternoon. I have about 950 students, so it's a full load. My classes are about 42 classes in the course of a seven day cycle, which means I see my students about three times a month, definitely not enough. I am busy, it is hard, it is challenging, but it is worth it and it is important. For the next part of my presentation, I'm gonna share a favorite lesson that has multiple possibilities. This can be done in any classroom, with simple materials and no art background for any aged learner. This is a two part process, the first part is a simple process art activity where we use tissue paper to transfer color to a piece of paper. Here is what you can achieve with that process. These gorgeous pages can be your final piece of art, or we use them as the starting point to creating a variety of new artworks, take a look. Here is a quick preview of just some of the ways we have used our background papers to create new art. Stick with me as I demo part one, and then stay tuned as I take those tissue paper transfers into other content areas. So when you begin this lesson, you can deliver it through many different lenses. I usually start with a blank paper and ask my kids to guess how we will get color on top of the paper without drawing or painting. This can start as a science lesson, talking about color mixing, or a social studies lesson discussing paper making. You could leave it just simply as a really incredible printing technique in art. You need to decide what type of paper you want to do your process on. I've got some

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photo paper here, which makes a very vibrant effect with the color, tag board work, any white drawing paper, watercolor would be great. This is thick poster board, anything that's got a little bit of thickness to it would be best. You don't want to use copy machine paper or anything thin because this is going to get quite wet. Next up on our supply list is a product that makes the magic happen. This is a material called bleeding art tissue and it's really important that it has that word bleeding in it. Art tissue is different from regular gift wrap tissue that you would wrap a present in. So it's very important that you have the correct material for this to work. Bleeding tissue has pigment embedded into each sheet that will transfer over to your paper once wet. Tissue paper comes in sheets, so you'll need to cut it and the way you cut it will depend on the results that you want to achieve at the end. I usually start by cutting my tissue paper into strips on my paper cutter, and then I go ahead and cut those into squares. Depending on the age level of your students, these squares can be any size. Once you have that done, you will also need water in some kind of a container, you can even use a spray bottle of water and a good paintbrush. The process is quite simple, you will begin by wetting your paper, no matter what type of paper that is, with your paintbrush, or again with a spray bottle and then begin placing your tissue paper squares in any arrangement you want knowing again, what your goal is can help you determine what colors would be important to have. The final and most important step is wetting again on top of your tissue paper. As I continue moving down my page, I'm gonna answer a couple of questions that you might be curious about. There does not have to be a rhyme or reason to how you place these tissue paper squares. I've watched students be very, very particular about the order and their color arrangement. I've watched kids be very, very random in their placement. One of the things I do say to them is be careful to not leave space and to make sure everything is wet depending again, on your final goal. Wet underneath and place your tissue, and again wet on top. You want to have water, don't worry about wrinkles, don't worry about edges, don't worry about going off the sides of your paper. This is our beautiful surface and you are beginning to see some of that incredible bleeding happening. This is the part that I love the most. This is the part that keeps the kids really engaged and wanting to see what's gonna happen. Most of the time, my students get this finished in one 45 minute period. Once everything is covered, the students would take their work to the drying rack and it would stay there as pieces start to fall off and dry until the next time we see each other. Okay, so part one of our process is complete. Our tissue paper is totally dry and we are ready for the big reveal. The color is spectacular and the detail and texture are just breathtaking. Looking at this piece with your students provides an excellent opportunity for lots of rich conversation. Their imaginations start to go and they have all kinds of speculations and observations about how this happened and it's a great dialogue. I thought it might be fun to show you this again a little bit differently and I'm going to use my spray bottle to wet some watercolor paper. It's a little bit smaller of a piece. This time, I'm gonna lay down complete strips of tissue paper. This is another way that you could work it if you have an idea for what type of final result you want. I'm thinking a little bit about a background for either Monet's Water Lilies or Van Gogh's Starry Night. Let's try this one. And so again, I'm spraying the

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surface before I put the tissue paper down, placing my tissue and once again spraying over the top of it and I'm doing a little bit of overlapping here, and we'll see the results of that. You're gonna see a much softer result on the watercolor paper than you did on this photo paper. Let's start with some ideas for our photo paper. The patchwork look lends itself nicely to creating art based on some classic children's books. Can you think of a few? This is a perfect example of how to use this photo paper with a few enhancements, I've got black Sharpie, a white gel pen and some sparkly paper on here. Another friend is Elmer, of course who is a patchwork elephant and again, just adding details with your Sharpie makes this come to life. Of course, the scraps and backgrounds can be used for collage. The children find this paper like treasure and make all kinds of things out of it. Another great literature connection would be the artwork of collage artist Eric Carle. Cutting our background sheets up into other things works wonderfully. After reading "Harold and The Purple Crayon", kindergartners tore their purple tissue paper in a math lesson on shape and overlapping. Think of a way you can work with your science teacher and cover both art and science standards. I am using a rubber stamp and a solid tempera paint stick to do some printing on top of a background. Here's an example of an artwork that uses other art materials on top of the original background. Sharpie or colored pencil, oil pastels, and watercolor all work perfectly to enhance your original background. Here's a connection to social studies. Students studying urban, rural, and suburban communities created buildings with long strips of tissue paper and later went back to add details. One of my favorite ways to use this is when we're teaching and learning about a famous artist. We used this background in a study of Robert Indiana who did that famous love icon sculpture. My students were to pick a nice four letter word and create their own. We have also created heart art in the style of American artist, Jim Dine. These pieces are from a Mondrian lesson. One on drawing paper, the other on photo paper. Could you see yourself doing this in conjunction with a math unit on geometry, shape, ratio, area, or perimeter? I love to use these backgrounds for lessons on organic shape, geometric shape, and line design, pattern and repetition, contrast, and emphasis. Positive and negative space. Okay.

- [Student] This one's pretty.

- [Lauralee] Okay. And of course, color theory, mixing, and so much more. The last thing I want to show you is what I did to that transfer we created earlier. Remember this? With our dry tissue paper squares, and a little bit of glue and a paintbrush for twisting I created some water lilies in the style of Claude Monet. After creating your backgrounds, you're gonna have a flood of beautiful tissue paper pieces. These are great to recycle into new projects. Finally, I want to share a way that you can use these dried tissue papers to create new paper. We call that a cast tissue tile and I use rubbing plates to be a mold to press our tissue into the grooves with a little bit of water and glue mixture. This is a rubbing plate that I have already taken and completed the process of pressing in pieces of tissue with white glue and water. After it dries overnight, it

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is ready to be peeled out. The student absolutely loved doing this and you will too, look at that. It's stiff and sturdy, depending on how many layers you use.

- [Student] This, I like one.

- [Student] Look at mine.

- [Lauralee] Let me see.

- [Student] You can really see!

- Oh my gosh, you guys. They could lead to another paper making process where you make pulp in a blender. They can be part of a lesson where you're learning about tiles, or different cultures and their motifs. Perhaps a rose window, or radial design, symmetry, and much more. Please be sure to check out my resource pages at the end for materials, directions, and more. So thank you so much for watching today. I hope I have been able to inspire you a little bit and I want you to promise me something. Make sure that you're always advocating for the arts. Make sure people understand that the arts are not a frill. The arts are an essential component of a rich, robust, full educational experience and you are gonna do your part to make sure everybody knows that. I'm happy to continue this conversation and help support you in your journey through arts and integration. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime. My contact information is here. I'd love to connect with you. My Instagram page is @2art.chambers and that's another source of lessons, and information, and tips, and I'd love to see you there. Thank you again, be well, stay healthy and best wishes.