

Menu

Have it Both Ways: Bilingual Co-Teaching at the Blanton

April 25, 2016 | Andrea Saenz Williams

« *Back to Blog*

SHARE ARTICLE

For the past two years the Blanton has been tinkering with what is rapidly becoming a national model: bilingual gallery lessons for K-12 school groups.



On a recent bilingual lesson with fourth graders from Sanchez Elementary, BBE co-teacher Mayte De Paz (front left), Blanton gallery teaching fellow Kimberlynn Martin (center right) and AISD art teacher Susan Holland

Menu

feel when playing video games. This was their third visit to the museum as part of the Art and Feelings multi-visit program.

I know what you're thinking. "Don't they already do that somewhere?" Nope. (We've checked.) A lot of museums provide tours in a language other than English (Spanish, mainly), but none, as far as we know, provide bilingual tours for school-age kids. Right now, the Blanton's bilingual tours are in both Spanish and English.

Ok, so how does a bilingual gallery lesson work?

First, it takes two co-teachers: one for each language. In the Blanton's case, we partnered with UT's College of Education and their Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Each semester we have worked with Dr. Haydee Rodriguez and her cohort of bilingual and bicultural education students (aka, future bilingual teachers!). We pair the bilingual students with the Blanton's gallery teaching fellows, who are graduate students in the art and art history department.

These co-teaching dream teams are asked to plan together as much as they can, setting a goal to teach close to 50/50 in both languages. Sometimes meeting this goal is easier than others. The first year of the program, most lessons were taught about 70% in English and 30% in Spanish. This year they're way better, hanging around 60/40 or even 50/50. However the Spanish to English ratio during the lesson depends on the duo of teachers.

An easy way to think about the co-teaching dynamic is to envision cooking dinner with a partner. You might do all the chopping while they sauté and stir. You might sit

Menu

partner might make a salad while you prepare the entree—you're doing a little more work, but you are both completing complementary portions of the same meal. The point is, in both cooking and in co-teaching, both partners play to their strengths and provide each other opportunities to jump in, learn, advise, observe, contribute.

So why is the Blanton doing this?

Each year about 11,000 K-12 students from all over Central Texas visit the Blanton. Many are Spanish-speaking. Over one quarter of the 83,524 students from Austin Independent School District (AISD) are Spanish-speaking. The district, the fourth largest in Texas^[1], has dedicated 57 of its 84 schools to dual language instruction—that's 68%. Until the Blanton instituted bilingual co-teaching, there was a language divide that resulted in a comprehension gap between conversations that took place in the museum and those at school. Basically, students whose primary language was Spanish couldn't fully participate in conversations about art when they were at the museum.

We decided to change this and move to a more inclusive model: teaching in both languages enables wide-ranging interpretive conversations to be had in the galleries, with fluid understanding.

Menu



A student discovering a work of art in the Blanton's modern and contemporary galleries.

Bilingual gallery lessons not only support dual language development for students who are learning English and Spanish, they also send an important signal to parents and the Austin community at large that the Blanton cares about dual language acquisition. If the Blanton's bilingual project had a motto, it might be something like, "Learning English is important, but don't forget your native language and culture. *Sí no lo usa, lo olvidas.*" If you listen in on a fifth grade bilingual gallery lesson you will hear students who are fluent in both languages speaking in a mix of English and Spanish. Chaperoning parents will sometimes participate too, in either language.

There are benefits to doing all this at a university art museum. Among them, back-stage access to rock-star partners is at your fingertips. This project has attracted the attention UT faculty across campus, visiting speakers, and doctoral candidates. It has been the topic of two national presentations this year alone.

The first batch of UT students that taught in the bilingual model at the Blanton are about to wrap up their initial year teaching in K-12 classrooms. We plan to

Menu

super-curious. did co-teaching in an art museum inform how they teach in their classrooms? Are they teaching with art more than they might otherwise? Stay tuned.

Andrea Saenz Williams manages the Blanton's school and teacher programs. Get in touch or learn more by contacting andrea.williams@blantonmuseum.org
[1]2016 Largest School Districts in Texas, retrieved Dec. 3, 2015 from k.12niche.com

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment

Name *

Email *

Website

Post Comment

SkyMall Kitties

Menu

The Genealogy of the Supermarket

May 17, 2017 | koven

Accent Elimination

April 25, 2017 | koven

Happening at the Blanton

Today's Hours 10am-5pm

EVENTS

Artist-in-Residence:

Aruna Kharod

Aug 03, 11:00am - 2:00pm

Public Tour: Epic

Tales from Ancient

India: Paintings from the San Diego

Museum of Art

Aug 03, 12:30pm - 1:30pm

Artist-in-Residence:

Aruna Kharod

Aug 05, 1:00pm - 4:00pm

Piranesi's

Rome

Opens Saturday, May 27th, 2017

Surabhi

Menu

3rd, 2017
Closes Sunday, August
27th, 2017

Messages & Meaning in Art

Aug 05, 3:00pm -
4:00pm

Artist-in-Residence: Aruna Kharod

Aug 06, 1:00pm -
4:00pm

Public Tour: Epic Tales from Ancient India: Paintings from the San Diego

Museum of Art

Aug 06, 3:00pm -
4:00pm

Blanton Museum of Art

The University of Texas at
Austin

200 E. Martin Luther King
Jr. Blvd.
Austin, TX 78712

PHONE: 512-471-5482

EMAIL:
info@blantonmuseum.org

Parking

Brazos Garage
210 E. Martin Luther King
Jr. Blvd.
Austin, TX 78712

[MAP](#)

Social



Menu

.....

[Contact Us](#)

[Facility Rental](#)

[eNews](#)

[Press](#)

[National Leadership
Board](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Accessibility Policy](#)