

An Initial Resource for Teachers & Students Visiting the Sculpture

Without providing the name of the sculpture or access to the information on the plaque, have students to stand back from the site, near the south walkway but on the original corporation sidewalk along Reeves Rd. Pause, requesting that students take time to really LOOK at the sculpture from this distance.

The open-ended *Visual Thinking Strategies* approach, as follows, can be used easily and repeatedly. It will work well with any age. (Third and fourth grade students will have limited knowledge of the work as they were not in the building when planning took place. Fifth grade classes may jump ahead significantly, if they can remember their involvement in the planning process.)

- What's going on in this sculptural grouping?
- What do you see that makes you think that?
- What more can you find?

(Paraphrase all responses to check your comprehension and provide clarity to the group, who may agree, or have other thoughts. As long as the answer has validity by what is seen, accept it and see if other ideas are put forth to be considered. If differing ideas are presented, you might summarize them before moving on. This is more about thinking, than being "right". Insight requires reflection. Thoughts evolve through discussion.)

Then ask more specific questions, moving to the areas below perhaps according to specific student comments. However, the sequence below is logical and may be helpful as organized.

- Who are the people represented by the three figures? (teachers, parents, community members-a businessman...maybe an engineer...Remember, don't provide answers shown here. Ask what they see that makes them think that.)
- What do you think the three figures would see, if they were real people/Where are they looking? (toward the tree...the nest)(Do you think it is an adult bird there?)(no, eaglet)
- What meaning does this arrangement have for you? Why was the young eagle chosen? (It represents both a mascot and each child/student in the district.)
- Why do you think a tree was chosen?/What ideas come to mind when you look at this particular tree? (...are you getting the idea now?...learning tree, giving tree, edge of the woods, Edgewood tree, the fall festival, etc.)
- What kind of a tree is it? What do you see that makes you think that?
- What materials were used to create the tree, as you see it? (Metal-steel and cast iron)
- How are the parts connected? (Bolts and welding, with clips holding the castings)
- What parts of the tree can you identify?
- What can you find in the canopy, the "leafy area of the tree"
- What makes this tree uniquely special?
- How does the use of black help your eye move through the sculpture?

- What is a symbol? To what do these symbols refer? Can you associate any ideas with the symbols?
- What purposes do the openings in the tree serve? (Air movement, reducing wind forces) Do you see anything interesting occurring by having these openings...Do you think it was a technical engineering decision, an aesthetic decision, or both?

Walk closer to the circular walkway around the tree

- What is on the trunk? (Can you recognize more symbols now that you are closer or does it just look as if the trunk has texture?)
- How do you think these pieces on the trunk are made or even attached?
- Why do you think some areas are black, while others are a rusty color?
- Looking at the orange/brown areas, do you think this is paint? (No, a waxy oil finish)

Walk around the circular walkway slowly pausing to see each quadrant of the tree.

- What do you find on the roots? Why do you think they are there? (words from CLASS)
- What changes do you notice as you look at the letters? (Different fonts, varying letter size)
- What affect do these variations have upon you? Do you like the choices?

Depending upon your group you might consider having one fourth of the class at a time carefully step from the walkway up to the footer area under the tree. (See the stepping stone.) Looking at one quadrant at a time, have each group in turn, report about what they see upon examination of the castings. (Note: a gentle touch to the metal is fine, though this waxoyl finish could transfer to the hands.)

- Why do you think this treatment was chosen over paint?
- What new symbols did you find? Do you have favorites?
- What subject or ideas do you see represented?
- How do you think these designs were created, with their obvious texture?
- (Students created the original panels on clay-covered wood. Those panels became "patterns" to be molded and cast with molten iron.)
- As you hear reports, ask if any of the castings are seen twice. If so, which ones?

With all students together on the south side of the tree, look back to the figures.

- What meaning can you now give to the sculpture?
- What further purpose and meaning is provided by the limestone blocks with letters on them and the bench?
- What do you notice about the concrete walkways? (the color, texture and curved lines)
- What kind of choices are these? Why do you think they were made?
- Why do you think there are two curved walkways from the south and east?
- What do you like about the plantings, around the tree and beyond it...the arc of roses?
- Why might these plants have been chosen?

- What do you particularly like about the sculpture?
- What would you have chosen to do differently.

(While the expressed content was fully under our supervision, each professional was an artist in making choices within their area, as to what would work best and produce a harmoniously unified grouping. This would have been ridiculous any other way. For example, Bybee Stone knows what fonts they have available, and from experience what size and style "works". They are experts. They made decisions, beyond size and form.

Discuss or summarize special meanings the sculpture may have provided through examination.

Then read the intended meaning associated with the sculpture, to can be found on the plaque:

The sculptural grouping, "Eagle's Nest", visualizes the mission of the school corporation. The eaglet poised ready for flight, represents both a mascot and each child in the community. The three figures watching the fledgling eaglet are symbolic of the joint responsibilities of parents, teachers, and community members who have, are, and will continue to nurture the development of our children. The "lifelines" of good character are cut into the roots of the learning tree while the trunk and canopy are emblazoned with oak leaves and symbols of learning. Limestone blocks mark the cardinal directions and a stone bench is placed for individual reflection.

Student's have named our school community sculpture "Eagle's Nest".

It is possible for students to speculate upon the variety of professional careers that were required to complete the project site. As well, they could consider how science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) were important components along with general literacy skills. Our professional partners, who collaborated with us in producing the work, each have their own distinct, specialized knowledge and vocabulary, yet they had to communicate clearly in words and writing. Nearly every professional partner utilized aspects of each STEAM area, though some might be given more emphasis than others. (Consider: How do you think a concrete finisher would have used math, or another STEAM area?)

The intent of the project was to create, with the school community, a meaningful representation of the corporation mission statement and also a teaching tool. For those who were involved during the last obsessive year of work, we did build our own communities of shared understanding and respect...and have stories. Some of those educational stories will find their way to others. You too may have ideas to share about how the sculpture can be used to provide experiences and teach subject areas...as you did teach art criticism today.

Do expect to find an ebook available. Designed with "Book Creator", it will provide the history and present the people and processes involved in the development of the sculpture. The interactive components of the ebook, at varying levels of difficulty, will cover STEAM connections. These will present real problems to the reader and considerations presented to us in the process of planning, creating the artwork, and developing the site. These could never be exhausted. Further examples could be imagined by creative teachers, yet the ebook will be a good guide. Internet sites and Apps will be listed too. By nature some of these links may become inactive in time, needing updates. It is a gift, easily modified. It will be available for download by you, your students, and the community, as well, sometime in the fall.

After three years...it is time for the school community to enjoy the sculpture fully and to discover what brought it into being. It has personal meaning and memories for many. It is up to others to make it a gathering place for photos, a spot to rest on a walk, or to use it as a teaching tool. To those with whom I have shared this adventure, I can only offer my thanks!

Brenda Wampler, project coordinator/former EIS art teacher