

Notes From Workshop #25: BostonAPP/Lab Goes To Boston Arts Academy's STEAM Lab

FEBRUARY 23, 2016

FROM THE WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT:

A recent quote from an unknown source: "Collaboration is not about gluing together existing egos. It's about the ideas that never existed until after everyone entered the room." Collaboration drives what BostonAPP/Lab does and what it seeks.

Collaboration is also, virtually by definition, what defines the Boston Arts Academy's STEAM Lab – where experimentation and exploration are constants as participants seek ways to integrate the arts into a curriculum of science, technology, mathematics, and engineering. Boston Arts Academy is the city's only public high school for the visual and performing arts and recently was one of eight schools recognized nationally by the Ovation Foundation and President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities for its STEAM initiative.

The goals in proposing a meeting of the Labs can be summarized as follows: (1) How does this program work in concept, in practice, in results? (2) How can this approach inform the ways in which artists might work in public places? (3) How can artists working in the public sphere in turn inform the work of the Lab?

STEAM lab is a place to play, think, create across disciplinary boundaries while keeping art central to learning: what possibilities does this kind of collaboration suggest?

STEAM Lab director Dr. Nettrice Gaskins began by narrating the Lab's work – its approach, its achievements, its relationship to the Boston Arts Academy as a whole, and ways in which the Lab's multidisciplinary approach can be and has been embedded in arts in public places. Her PowerPoint presentation was further enriched by the description by one of her students, Nate Whitaker, of his own explorations around the notion of "virtual space."

As can be seen in the admittedly fractured nature of the notes below, the general Q&A and the subsequent small-group discussions were more evocative than conclusive, generating some basic questions (*schools as public space*), topics for deeper exploration (*weighing the A in STEAM*), pondering next steps (*how do we share expertise*).

We hope readers will weigh in with their own questions – and even answers – regarding this kind of collaboration, and what it may mean for schools, for art, and for the interrelationships between the two. How can schools, in fact, be – or are they already? – public spaces?



Culture: how it operates in the country

- What we do daily that produces energy output
- How to tap into cultural knowledge
 - Path through ArtsCommons
 - Cultures interact and inform most about their culture:
 - Later collect and identify strengths and ways to improve...or identify needs
- Other schools that do not have ability and resources to bring STEAM lessons into their classes: *how do we share expertise?*
- *What can I take away that I can do right now?*
 - Portable STEAM lab?
- Weighing the "A" in STEAM
- Making STEAM look like a lot of things
- How do we make STEAM accessible?
- Finding motivation in the art: enough to explore/learn
- Capacity for time/level of involvement

- Understanding the “Why” (this is cool, but how does it work?)
- Augmented realities: how it changes the typical classroom
 - Eliminate infrastructure of projectors, marker boards, smart boards, tv’s
 - Eliminate computer labs, and dedicated technology space
 - New spaces all have technology and art capabilities
 - “tinkering spaces”
- Art and food
- Educations sites and land as public art space
- Schools as public space: *outward, not inward*
- Intergenerational, intercultural, interdisciplinary art:
 - Critique: subjugated knowledges
 - Art for the “defined” people?
 - Technology of the self (Foucault), not just “technological devices”
 - “Dynamize” gaps, negative spaces/places
 - Multiple feeds into central spaces:
 - Alumni, creative core, neighborhoods, cultures, populations, group