FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / K–2 / 01

Neighborhood Color Stories

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: K–2 | 3–4 studio sessions of 35–45 min

Media: Crayon, paper collage, tempera or watercolor

The artistic problem

Create a layered picture of a real or imagined place that feels welcoming, important, or memorable. The place might be a front step, school hallway, garden, corner store, bus stop, playground, or a place connected to a family story.

Essential question: How can color and shape tell someone what a place means to us?

Place-based cultural lens: New Orleans has many visual languages: painted houses, porches, neighborhood signs, public murals and everyday gathering places. Teach the city through lived neighborhood experiences, not only its tourist images.

Learning targets

- Name and use at least three shapes and two intentional colors.
- Place a focal point and add layers/overlap to show the setting.
- Explain at least one choice that communicates belonging.

Student-visible success criteria

- A recognizable or invented setting communicated through shapes.
- Two purposeful color choices, with a reason for one.
- At least one overlap or near/far relationship.
- A change after a peer conversation.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana K–4 cluster: VA-CE-E1, VA-CE-E3, VA-CE-E5, VA-AP-E6

Studio Habits of Mind: Observe, Express, Envision, Reflect. These habits are developed interactively, not in a fixed rank or sequence.

Instructional alignment: Louisiana benchmark codes are official broad grade-cluster benchmarks; specific expectations are developed locally. The ten instructional stages come from the supplied Artistic Investigations framework.

Preparation & materials

- Drawing and colored paper
- Crayons or washable paint
- Glue sticks and scissors with safety routines
- Photos of diverse local spaces supplied with permission

- Optional textured papers and thick-grip tools

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Show several local places without labeling any one as the "real" New Orleans. Ask: Where would you feel welcome and why?

02 / Investigate Use a notice/wonder walk or teacher-supplied pictures. Find shapes, colors, doors, plants, signs, and gathering spaces.

03 / Skill Studio Model overlapping two paper shapes, grouping colors by mood, and establishing one main place. Show three distinct solutions, not a copyable final.

04 / Generate Make two quick picture possibilities; students can talk through ideas, point to picture cards, or draw.

05 / Plan Circle one main idea and choose two colors to support the feeling. Share the plan with a partner.

06 / Produce Build large shapes first; add doors, textures, a path, figures or objects only if they serve the story.

07 / Critique Partner says "I notice…" and "I wonder…" while pointing to visual evidence.

08 / Revise Add, move, or recolor one part to clarify the chosen feeling; photograph or save first draft.

09 / Present Create a class "Many Places of Welcome" gallery; students choose title and display placement.

10 / Reflect Say, draw, or record: "I want you to notice __. I changed __ because __."

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Launch + looking closely** Location-shape hunt and color talk; collect two ideas.	Baseline two shapes and one described color choice.
Day 2	**Skill + plan** Overlap demo; two thumbnails; select focal place.	Teacher checks thumbnail and color intention.
Day 3	**Make + conference** Layer shapes; brief artist conference.	Photograph work in progress, note chosen skill.
Day 4	**Critique + revise + share** Peer observation; one visible change; gallery and reflection.	Save before/after and audio or written sentence.

Key technique to model

Shape vocabulary, overlapping, focal emphasis, and choosing color for meaning.

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Offer tactile shapes, large templates used only for planning, oral explanation, picture words in home languages, accessible cutting options, and seated observation. Keep the same artistic goal.

Teacher coaching questions

- What is the visual problem you are solving?
- Which decision communicates your intended meaning most clearly?
- What does your reference prove, and what are you still imagining?
- What could a viewer misunderstand?

- What visible revision will strengthen your next version?

Cultural care

Use photographs with consent; do not frame any neighborhood as deficient. Invite students to identify meaningful public spaces without asking for personal addresses.

Stretch & explore

Make a paired scene showing how two neighbors might experience the same place differently; discuss why both stories matter.

Design provenance: Original early-elementary adaptation of the common Artistic Investigations architecture; especially observation, personal choice, and reflection.