FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / K–2 / 17

Signs That Welcome

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: K–2 | 3–4 sessions, 35–45 minutes

Media: washable art media and cut-paper supplies

The artistic problem

Design a friendly sign for a shared classroom or imagined community space.

Essential question: How can an image communicate without many words?

Place-based cultural lens: Notice multilingual signs and public symbols used in everyday New Orleans life.

Learning targets

- Investigate the question: How can an image communicate without many words?
- Apply pictograms, simple typography, contrast, hierarchy in a deliberate original composition.
- Use critique evidence to improve pictograms and name one next step.

Student-visible success criteria

- The final artwork solves this problem: Design a friendly sign for a shared classroom or imagined community space.
- Artwork includes one readable symbol tested by two viewers.
- Process evidence shows two different options before selection.
- Visual decisions demonstrate pictograms and support the intended audience.
- Feedback results in at least one visible revision that the student can explain.

Standards & studio habits

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

Studio Habits of Mind: Observe, Envision, Express, 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 paper or sketchbook for idea studies
- washable art media and cut-paper supplies
- Samples and images from reliable sources, with attribution
- Tools appropriate to local safety rules and grade level
- Choice of visual, oral, or written reflection tools

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Present the artistic question: How can an image communicate without many words? Give students two contrasting examples that do not dictate a finished product.

02 / Investigate Notice multilingual signs and public symbols used in everyday New Orleans life. Gather visual evidence and note what is observed rather than assumed.

03 / Skill Studio Demonstrate pictograms, simple typography, contrast, hierarchy. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.

04 / Generate Develop two possibilities for the challenge: Design a friendly sign for a shared classroom or imagined community space. Change the focal point, material, arrangement or viewer perspective between drafts.

05 / Plan Compare sketches to the success check (one readable symbol tested by two viewers); choose a direction and state why it better communicates the intention.

06 / Produce Produce an original visual response using pictograms, simple typography, contrast, hierarchy; conference on one technical choice and one contextual question.

07 / Critique Partners identify where the artwork communicates the intended idea and locate evidence of pictograms in the work.

08 / Revise Revisit the specific checkpoint: One readable symbol tested by two viewers. Make one visible change after critique and preserve the initial view for comparison.

09 / Present Present with a title, medium, one key artistic decision and any needed credit or contextual limitation.

10 / Reflect Reflect: What evidence proves you improved pictograms? What will you try or investigate next?

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Notice + explore** Notice multilingual signs and public symbols used in everyday New Orleans life.	Record one noticing and a quick mark-making sample.
Day 2	**Skill studio + choices** Demonstrate pictograms, simple typography, contrast, hierarchy. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates. Children develop two possibilities.	Photo or scan of two studies, with a selected idea.
Day 3	**Make + conference** Create the artwork; show one decision at a time.	Teacher notes use of pictograms.
Day 4	**Critique + revise + share** Peer observation, visible change and oral/visual reflection.	Save before/after samples and next goal.

Key technique to model

pictograms, simple typography, contrast, hierarchy

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Welcome home languages, emerging readers, and communication systems beyond print. Offer physical samples, captioned images, accessible demonstrations, flexible planning modes, and alternate materials while retaining the common visual learning target.

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

Do not assume one language or script is the default for everyone.

Stretch & explore

Redesign the sign for someone viewing it from farther away.

Design provenance: Original Studio Fieldnotes investigation developed for the 50-lesson library; informed by the teacher-supplied ten-stage Artistic Investigations architecture and reflective Studio Habits framework.