

# Table of Contents

Preface .....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vii
<b>Overview of Chicago Public Schools Art Collection .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Format.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Criteria for Mural Selections .....</b>	<b>2</b>
WPA-FAP Sponsorships	
Exclusion from Previous Curriculum Projects	
Regional Diversity	
Thematic Diversity and Curricular Connections	
Artistic Diversity	
<b>General Concepts and Themes.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Murals	
The Great Depression, the New Deal, and the WPA-FAP	
Patronage	
The Tools and Techniques of Art	
History	
The Language of Art	
The Role of the Artist and Art in Society	
Conservation, Restoration, and Preservation	
<b>Lessons Plans .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(Grade Levels: K-3, 4-8, and 9-12)</b>	
<i>Characters from Children’s Literature .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Decorative Landscape .....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Children’s Subjects (Fine Arts) .....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>History of Books (Bookmaking) .....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Incidents in the Life of Luther Burbank .....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>History of Morgan Park (American Indians) .....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Outstanding American Women (Jane Addams) .....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>History of the New World (Modern Life) .....</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>Discovery of America (Landing of Christopher Columbus) .....</i>	<i>93</i>
<i>History of Chicago (World Columbian Exposition-1893) .....</i>	<i>105</i>
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix A Glossary of Terms .....	117
Appendix B Location of and Other Information About the Murals.....	123
Appendix C Selected Bibliography and Resource List .....	145

# Preface

On February 23, 2000, the Chicago Board of Education (“the Board”) adopted Art Policy 00-02230POI on the acquisition, ownership, conservation, and maintenance of the works of art owned by the Chicago Public Schools.

***The Chief Executive Officer recommends the following:***

*The Board takes great pride in the extensive collection of fine art works housed in Chicago public schools. Recognizing that art is fundamental to providing and meeting our educational goals, supplementing classroom curriculum, enhancing the educational environment of our schools, and enriching our communities, it is the recommendation of the Board that the collection of works of art be used as an integral part of classroom instruction and be displayed for viewing in schools and at exhibitions in and outside the city of Chicago. The Board is further committed to ensuring the preservation, documentation, conservation, and maintenance of artworks owned by the Chicago Public Schools, hereafter to be known as the Permanent Art Collection of Chicago Public Schools.*

The objectives of the CPS Permanent Art Collection include designing creative and integrative scholastic curricula, providing students and researchers access to the collection via technology, increasing public awareness about the rich history and value of the collection, and providing CPS students with cultural enrichment experiences and historically based knowledge about the city and communities in which they live.

The Office of Language and Cultural Education was delegated the sole responsibility for the promotion of the CPS Permanent Art Collection.

The purpose of this curriculum guide is to facilitate implementation of the Board policy by providing teachers at all grade levels with a resource that they may utilize, as needed, as they introduce this art collection curriculum into their classroom.



# Acknowledgments

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\* Positions or school locations indicated for project participants at the time of this publication's development.

Appreciation is also extended to the Office of Schools and Regions for assistance.



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# Overview of the Chicago Public Schools Permanent Art Collection

In 1997, a local firm was hired to locate, inventory, and appraise the artworks, artifacts, and antiques in the possession of the Chicago Public Schools. The project was not merely an audit, but rather a quest to ascertain the location and financial value of the CPS art collection so that it could be a resource for both teachers and students.

The completion of this task took four years. Nearly 8,000 objects were located, of which 1,500 turned out to be original murals, paintings, sculptures, and works on paper. It was the first complete accounting of the CPS art collection. While it was known that some public schools in the system had magnificent original works developed and completed through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a search revealed that a collection of much greater depth existed: American impressionism, WPA paintings and works on paper, early 20th Century American painters, modern masters, and portrait collections by such well-known artists as Grant, Bohrod, Ufer, Dali, and Scott. An initiative undertaken by the CPS Board of Trustees in 1997 has now identified and preserved the WPA-inspired artworks for generations to enjoy.

In 2000, the CPS art collection became a major responsibility of the Office of Language and Cultural Education (OLCE). OLCE continues the restoration of the artwork and oversees its promotion and display to CPS students, parents, and staff and to the general public through a series of initiatives including:

**Restoration.** From 1998-2000, a total of 40 murals donated by General Motors to Lane Technical High School were restored, along with many other murals and paintings in dozens of other CPS schools. Nearly 300 artworks in all were restored by the end of year 2000. Additionally, 120 artworks (66 murals, two large low-relief sculptures, and 52 paintings) were restored between 2000 and 2002. Examples of the restoration work can be seen in the CPS art collection Web site.

**Web Site.** The Web site [www.cpsart.org](http://www.cpsart.org) offers researchers and the general public the possibility to search for information about specific works of art in the collection, artists, locations of artwork by school or region, the conservation program, and related programs. For the first time in the history of the CPS art collection, all artworks are now available for viewing by teachers, students, researchers, and the general public.

**Traveling Exhibition.** This program enables annual CPS art collection exhibitions to take place at each school region in the city in an effort to make viewing the artwork more accessible to students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

The Chicago Board of Education through its vision and commitment has established itself as a national leader in art preservation and restoration. Releasing this magnificent collection of original works from obscurity and preserving these works for future generations are invaluable gifts to our city, our school system, and the children they serve.



# Introduction

*The Chicago Public Schools Art Collection Mural Curriculum Guide, K-12* explores the history and background of 10 selected artists and their mural creations completed through the Works Progress Administration, and which are now part of the CPS Permanent Art Collection. The mural curriculum was designed to accommodate all grade and achievement levels of CPS students.

The curriculum guide is composed of lessons that relate to one of 10 themes. Lessons based on each theme are included for each grade-level range, i.e., K-3, 4-8, and 9-12. The Chicago Fine Arts Academic Standards served as the foundation and guide for the development of each lesson. Thus, at least one of the four core subjects outlined in the Chicago Academic Standards is integrated into each lesson for each grade-level range. The information given below delineates the format each lesson follows and the integration of the standards on which each lesson is based.

## The Format

**Title** is the name of the artwork.

**Artist** is the person who created the artwork.

**Medium** represents the technique and type of materials used to create the artwork.

**School** indicates the CPS school site where a given artwork is located.

**Grade Level** indicates the intended grade(s) of students for whom the lesson was designed.

**Correlations** refer to the Fine Arts Standards, Chicago Academic Standards, and Curriculum Framework Statements (Example: 25.A.2 means Illinois Learning Standard #25, Chicago Academic Standard A, and Curriculum Framework #2), which indicate what students should know and be able to do upon the completion of the lesson.

**Materials** are a list of all necessary supplies and resources needed for the successful teaching/learning of the lesson.

**Vocabulary** is a list of recommended words whose meanings should be taught and developed before, during, and after activities contained in each lesson.

**Educational Strategies** are recommended procedures that might be used by the classroom teacher to introduce and teach lessons. Teachers are encouraged to modify any strategy to best meet the needs of their students.

**Accommodations** include additional strategies that might be employed in teaching lessons to students with disabilities, bilingual students, and/or limited-English-proficient students, and in providing enrichment activities that will extend and enhance the instructional strategies suggested in the lessons.

**Evaluation/Assessment** gives guiding questions to assist classroom teachers in determining what students have learned and are able to do at the conclusion of the lesson.

**Home Connection/Homework** provides activities for parental/family involvement in classroom instruction.



# Introduction

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**Resources** list additional materials, Web sites, and books that might be used in the conducting of the lesson.

**Teacher's Notes** provide modifications, hints, and suggestions that teachers might find helpful in the teaching of the lesson.

## Criteria for Mural Selections

Over 200 murals were commissioned for and placed in Chicago public schools between 1900 and 1946. Of the existing murals, 10 were selected for inclusion in the pilot year of the Chicago Public Schools Mural Curriculum Project. The selection of murals was based on the following criteria:

### 1. WPA-FAP Sponsorship

Although mural making has been a part of Chicago schools since the turn of the 20th Century, this 2002 project concentrates on a unique period in both American and art history. The 10 murals that are part of this project were produced between 1935 and 1943 under the auspices of the mural division of the Illinois Art Project (IAP). The IAP was the local branch of the Works Progress Administration-Federal Art Project (WPA-FAP). These agencies were organized under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s.

### 2. Exclusion from Previous Curriculum Projects

This project is intended to expand and complement existing resources on historic artworks housed in Chicago public schools. Therefore, none of these 10 murals have ever been included in previous curriculum projects, such as The Art Institute of Chicago's *Chicago: The City in Art* (1995-2000).

### 3. Regional Diversity

Each of the six CPS regions is represented by at least one mural housed in a school located in that region. This thus demonstrates fairness and encourages a more comprehensive study of the unique qualities of neighborhoods throughout Chicago. In addition, field trips to mural sites are facilitated.

### 4. Thematic Diversity and Curricular Connections

The 10 murals represent major themes and subjects depicted in WPA-FAP school murals. These subjects include historical scenes, portraits, children's literature, and landscapes. The wide range of subjects and topics depicted in these murals shows the intrinsic connection between the fine arts and other subject areas.

### 5. Artistic Diversity

Each of the selected murals was produced by a different artist. This offers teachers and students a better opportunity to study stylistic, technical, and artistic differences in the school murals. In addition, the artists are evenly divided between male and female, thereby avoiding any gender bias.

## General Concepts and Themes

Each mural in this project stands alone artistically and serves as a springboard for both oral and written discussion. Each work of art presented in this guide opens the door for a rich study of American or Chicago history, science, nature, literature, famous men and women, and artistic achievements and techniques. Broader concepts and themes, however, link all the murals and



can be addressed for a more comprehensive study of the artistic and historical treasures that are found in Chicago public schools. Below are some of these broader concepts and themes, as well as some suggested questions to spur teacher and student interest in these ideas.

### 1. Murals

Aside from discussing the history of murals in Chicago public schools, raise the questions: *What is a mural? How is a mural different from an easel painting? Why is a mural a site-specific work of art? How does a mural connect artist, community, and patron?*

### 2. The Great Depression, the New Deal and the WPA-FAP

The murals that form the core of this project emerged from federal sponsorship of the arts during the Great Depression. In particular, these murals were commissioned by the Illinois Art Project (IAP). The IAP was the regional branch of the Federal Art Project (FAP), which was a wing of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). For the first time in American history, these agencies allowed the arts to be federally funded on a large scale. The WPA programs were part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, a federal government effort of reforms whose aim was to lift the country from the Great Depression and provide jobs for Americans who had been put out of work. Under the WPA, artists were paid salaries to produce works for public buildings such as schools. Questions: *Why do you think art played such a strong role during the Great Depression? How do these murals reveal the period during which they were created? How do they put forth an optimistic image of America? How do they create a national identity?*

### 3. Patronage

The process of commissioning and patronizing WPA murals is significant in many ways. For example, it marks a departure from strictly private patronage of the arts. Ask students to think about the issue of patronage: *How did this patronage compare with patronage in the past? Can you give examples of public or private patronage in contemporary society?*

### 4. The Tools and Techniques of Art

The murals in the schools are produced in several different ways. Some works are oil on canvas. Others are produced in the more traditional fresco technique. Some artists painted directly on the wall. Others painted in their studios or in communal spaces provided by the IAP. The processes and media used by the artists represent a wide range of artistic techniques and styles that are ripe for an in-depth study of the fine arts. Compare and contrast the different techniques, media, and styles used by the artists. Have students experiment with these different techniques.

### 5. History

Both the historical and cultural contexts from which these murals emerged and the historic subjects they represent offer rich material for engaging students. Local and national histories are primary themes in New Deal murals. Ask: *Why do you think it was important to depict American history during the Great Depression? What historical events are shown? How do different artists represent history? How does our historical perspective affect our readings of the works? How do contemporary artists represent history?*

### 6. The Language of Art

These murals represent several genres of painting: portraiture, history painting, landscape, and still life. Each mural also asks us to consider the various devices used by the artist to depict his or her subject. Differing uses of value, line, symmetry, composition, balance, and palette serve as comparative material and a starting point for a discussion of the language of art. Compare and contrast works to explore differing uses of line, value, color, balance, composition, and perspective. Ask students: *How do these different techniques convey a certain message or a particular mood?*



## 7. The Role of the Artist and Art in Society

The role of the artist and art in society is an important topic in these mural works. In particular, artists were considered integral and contributing members of society during the New Deal. The murals they painted were crucial to social reform and were tools for raising public morale during the Great Depression. Questions: *How is this view of the artist during the New Deal different from that of other periods in history? How has this notion changed? How does this notion compare to the myth of the tortured and marginalized artist whose work is misunderstood by the general public during his or her lifetime?*

## 8. Conservation, Restoration, and Preservation

The techniques and results of conservation and restoration are key to a study of these murals. Thanks to recent conservation efforts, these murals are being “re-discovered” (culturally and educationally) after decades of neglect. Through curriculum projects such as this one, these works will once again become important elements of school life and a source of school pride. Ask: *How can we continue to preserve these important works? How can we encourage students, teachers, and the community to aid in this preservation effort through curriculum? How can students, teachers, and community members take part in protecting these treasures? What can you do to raise awareness and pride in your school’s or your neighborhood’s murals?*

