

The missions of MonCoin: A curriculum for mobile media and civic engagement in the visual art classroom

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MonCoin, which means “MyCorner” in English, is a research project that investigates the practical, curricular, and theoretical implications of teaching and learning using mobile and social media in the visual arts classroom. In the last five years, Concordia Art Education researchers have collaborated with secondary school art educators and close to 300 secondary students in four different French and English language after-school and in-school programs. Our objective is to design, test, and develop a visual art curriculum using mobile media (e.g. smartphones and tablets) and social media (e.g. Instagram) to connect students to their schools, surroundings and each other. Our data analysis has already yielded insights into the potentials and pitfalls of using mobile media in schools. In terms of civic engagement we found that youth were initially more interested in learning how to make “good-looking” images, and once they were technically confident some used their images to look critically at their civic environments (Pariser, Castro, Lalonde, 2016). We also found that youth are invested in constructing their identity online through the multimodal documentation of the physical and temporal spaces of the everyday (Lalonde, Castro, Pariser, 2016). Further, the use of mobile media was initially hypothesized as a means for engaging at-risk youth outside of school, only to find that, when given the choice of where they could move and meet, participants expressly sought out opportunities to be together in school (Castro, Lalonde, Pariser, 2016). We have also shown how mobile media can be used to amplify peer-learning and educational engagement (Akbari, et al., 2016). In our final phase of data analysis we are investigating ways that art educators can use mobile and social media to shift students’ social relationships, and enhance teaching and learning in art classrooms through the use of mobile and social media.

The MonCoin curriculum is based on constraints that enable (Castro, 2007; Castro, 2013) and video game type motivations (Gee, 2003) framed as missions. Our missions were designed to ask students to reexamine their everyday surroundings and create images that shared her or his particular way of seeing

through images posted to our social network. The missions were structured in such a way that students began with investigating themselves (see Figures 1—4.), then expanded to consider their school environment (see Figures 5—7.), branched out to explore their neighborhoods (see Figures 8—11.), and finally posted their own missions and responded to their peer’s missions (see Figures 12 & 13, and Akbari, et al., 2016). Underlying the core design is an impetus for movement through spaces and places. This feature takes advantage of the networked and mobile capabilities of internet-connected smartphones. The missions are flexible and adaptable. Whenever we collaborate with art teachers, we encourage them to adapt the missions to fit the needs of her or his students and the local context. The MonCoin missions presented here are an example of how mobile media can be used as a creative tool to explore one’s environs and to connect with others.

Figure 1. (page 84) An example of a large themed mission that includes the directions, hashtags to use, and ethical considerations. After Figure 2, only the mission itself is listed. Mission 1: Self. In the first mission we will explore the theme of identity. Show us something about who you are, but without revealing your identity or showing your face. Make sure you use the hashtags: #mission1_self . We will post more micro missions to inspire you each day related to this mission if you are stuck. Remember: only post content (pictures and words) that you would be comfortable sharing with your teachers or parents.

NON COLLECT MY

Figure 2. Micro Mission 1a: My collection. Many of us collect things. Our collections are a reflection of who we are. Show us what you collect. Sharing a collection visually is all about showing many things in one image. Don't forget to think about the compositional techniques discussed today when making your images: light, the rule of thirds, edges of the image, framing, getting close. This is the second micro mission. It is related to the #mission1_self. The micro missions are to help you explore the bigger mission. You do not have to respond to every micro mission, only those that inspire you. Remember: only post content (pictures and words) that you would be comfortable sharing with your teachers or parents. Do not post images that you have not made. Use the hashtags: #micromission_mycollection and #mission1_self



Figure 3. Micro Mission 1b: What I make. Many of us make things. What we make reflects who we are. Show us what you make. Don't forget to think about the compositional techniques discussed today when making your images: light, the rule of thirds, edges of the image, framing, getting close.

WHAT I MAKE

WHAT I SEE



Figure 4. Micro Mission 1c: What I see. How we see the world and what we look at help define who we are. This micro mission can be responded to in a number of different ways. One possibility is to visually communicate how you see the world—from what catches your eye to your philosophy of how the world works. 'What I See' is very open-ended.



MY SCHOOL

Figure 5. Mission 2: My School. The second mission involves visually communicating what your school means to you. We are posting all the micro missions at once to inspire you on your walk through school during class today.

Figure 6. Micro Mission 2a: Where I learn best. Where do you learn best in school? There are places in every school where we feel smart, know something, and are confident to apply what we know.



Figure 7. Micro Mission 2b: Change. Is there something you would change about your school? What would it be? Why would you want to change it? Only show things that realistically can be changed with your positive contributions.

CHANGE

MY NEIGHBOURHOOD

Figure 8. Mission 3: My Neighborhood. The third mission involves visually communicating what the neighbourhood around the school and where you live, means to you.



MESSAGES

Figure 9. Micro Mission 3a: Messages. In the urban environment there are messages everywhere. There are loud messages and quiet messages. What are these messages telling you?

At LEAST you can read



Figure 10. Micro Mission 3b: Paths I take. What paths do you take through your neighbourhood?

PATHS I TAKE



Figure 11. Micro Mission 3c: Notice. Look carefully and closely at your surroundings. Do you notice anything that you would not have noticed if you weren't looking carefully? For this micro_mission seek out and photograph the little things that you might encounter in your everyday surrounding that generally go unnoticed.

NOTICE

POST YOUR OWN MISSION

Figure 12. Mission 4a: Post your own mission. This is our favorite mission. For this one we want you to post a mission with a photo for your classmate's and teacher to respond to. Good missions are specific yet open-ended so that you can't predict what people will post as a response. Good missions get at what connects us as humans, yet asks us to use our unique experience to create a response. Please, ensure that your missions will not require the person who responds to harm themselves, others or property. Post only what you'd be comfortable posting on the board at school.

RESPOND TO A MISSION

Figure 13. Mission 4b:
Respond to a mission.
Select and respond to one
or more mission(s) posted
by one of your classmates.

No pas s'a
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Do not lean o

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