

# The STARTOONING Drawing Instruction Program

Daniel Arthur

## PART 1. LIFELONG LEARNING

The Startooning drawing instruction program began after asking my father to teach me how to draw when I was eight years old. In the following years, as I became an artist, I did not think about teaching anyone else. I suppose I could have. But nobody asked me for twenty years. When I was asked, it took me by surprise. The life of a visual artist is typically a solitary one. To be asked to share one's art skills is more common in the field of music, when one becomes the member of a band or orchestra. The design equivalent occurs when you decide to build a car. In architecture it happens in the process of constructing a bridge or a building. In cartooning it happens in animation. When I was asked to collaborate on an art project, it happened in a grade school. I was not asked by the administration nor the teacher, but by students. It was then that I realized not much progress had occurred in the teaching of visual arts. The field was still predominantly design and crafts based, with such materials as crayons and finger paints, rather than a focus on the development of drawing skills, which is less expensive, but more difficult and time consuming. Kids still wanted to learn to draw, but teachers still didn't know how, and weren't even interested in learning themselves. When I found myself staring back at twelve faces, wanting to know the secrets of cartooning, waiting to see if I would help them on their pathway to discovery, I saw myself in their eyes, waiting for my dad's response. How could I say no?

So, I began to learn how to become a teacher. After doing that I began learning how to become a better teacher. Here I am, 30 years later, still doing the same thing.

## PART 2. PERSONAL GROWTH

Any form of creativity is as self-disciplined as it is spontaneous or intuitive. To people in noncreative professions, however, it often seems arbitrary, mysterious, and even contrary to their very lifestyle. On the road to becoming an art teacher, I was faced with merging these opposing forces within myself, like being Captain Kirk, and his evil twin, Kaptin Toon. Saturday morning cartoon shows have been the bane of teachers and parents since they first aired. The fact that I wanted to bring them into the classroom was not going to sell well. There was not much research about the actual value of the arts education in the seventies. So, I did research on the books that were available to grade schools, discovered what they were studying and reading, and adapted my drawings to the daily needs of the students. The most universal connection was to spelling and vocabulary. That meant I had to know age-appropriate words for my typed handouts, and reconstruct my own vocabulary for oral presentations. This evolved into a vocabulary program called Alphabet Faces. The same characters could be used in phonics and spelling lessons by calling it AlfaBat Fasez. This also allowed me to begin experimenting with the power of the pun, and other forms of humor.

There were many changes in 1977. Star Wars and Close Encounters of the Third Kind forever altered consumer culture. Both movies were populated with aliens, as was the earlier Star Trek, but science fiction had never been popular until then. The fact that I had met the Star Wars stars, shook their hands, and took their pictures for the first Star Wars magazine, made me somewhat of a celebrity in the classrooms I visited. They were the best credentials I could have for student acceptance. Knowing they were going to want to draw them, I went a step further, updating my portfolio to include their

caricatures, and redesigning the other movie characters as cartoon kids.

In 1979, I discovered Betty Edwards', Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, which caught on with other teachers in the early eighties and is now considered a classic, even in management training. I felt that her procedures worked better with older audiences, over a longer period of time, so I continued using and developing my own exercises for younger students. That was also the year that I became an Art Instructor at a special education district, where I began working with a team of other teachers. Our student population was diverse and frankly, abnormal. But this gave us all an opportunity to apply creative problem solving techniques and learn about each other's subject areas. For me, it meant I had to learn to work as a team member. That required a lot of reading, listening and note taking. It was an environment filled with esoteric jargon and acronyms. Working with an art therapist, I learned approaches to the psychological evaluation of art and how that evaluation might be altered by specific drawing instruction sequences. My Alphabet Faces began being used by the school psychologist, not as a drawing program, but as a visualization exercise to promote client conversations. I was literally given a TV studio that none of the other teachers wanted to use. Working with another artist and a video engineer, I learned the capabilities of the equipment and designed activities that students could perform on camera for later evaluation by other faculty and staff. I learned about speech impediments, hearing losses and the use of audiology equipment. Much of the testing was designed to isolate and pinpoint specific disabilities, to determine, for example, if there was really a hearing loss or a disability in brain functioning. I learned a great deal about the human capabilities for learning from the visual arts, even when severely disabled. Language is a complex symbolic structure.

Iconic imagery is easier to follow through an input-output sequence, and travels through a different area of the brain.

### PART 3. THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Back in 1977, without much notice, Dr. Jean Houston, Director of the Foundation for Mind Research, wrote an article for the September third issue of Saturday Review, which should have had as much impact on education as Star Wars had on the rest of the world. She summed up her research with the following statement. “The child without access to a stimulating arts program is being systematically cut off from most of the ways in which he can perceive the world. His brain is being systematically damaged. In many ways he is being de-educated.” This stunning statement validated what I had felt about my school experience since my first day of kindergarten. It provided hard research from a respected authority. My work no longer needed to be connected to fine arts. It was about brain development.

### PART 4. CAREER EDUCATION

One of the most important things I’ve learned is about people with Doctorate Degrees. There seems to be something about the process of obtaining the degree that strips away the ability to visualize anything. In 1980, I was working with three people with doctorates in education. I had a terrible time having conversations with them. They had learned such an extensive, convoluted, and specialized vocabulary that they could barely have a conversation with anyone outside their subculture. Upon one occasion, I was asked to visualize a thirty-page document for a presentation about the students we were working with. I was expected to read it, determine what visuals could be added,

then create some overheads for a presentation. There were less than ten picture words in the entire document. The ones included were inappropriate for the context of the information. When I pointed this out, I had to explain what a picture word was. Here are two of the actual examples: In one instance, the word “steps” was used to describe a process that was neither sequential nor hierarchical. The word “spokes” was the appropriate visual term for what was being described. In another instance, a situation was described as “the student then exhibited non-verbal aggression toward an inanimate object.” I knew what was being referenced. A student had thrown a chair across a room. The Doctor did not want to say that because his protocol demanded a generalized statement about the behavior. So he wanted me to design a generalized image of his exact words, without using images of a specific object or specific verb. My inability to do that reinforced, in his mind, my inadequacy and that of the arts to meet his superior intellectual needs. This is something we all need to think about for a very long time. For this is at the core of the power, inadequacy, and ultimate demise, of our present educational institutions. This is why Education is symbolized as an Ivory Tower. Ivory is precious because it was once part of a living thing. As a carving it is a trophy of the killing of the thing. Someone proud enough to live in a tower made of it, to look out of intricately carved window frames, year after year, at the carcasses from which it came, and not get the true picture of the travesty of such a place, is a tragic creature to behold.

## PART 5. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The alien terrain I’ve been beamed into is a world of arts organizations typically populated by society’s upper crust, with a focus on the Fine Arts, primarily painting,

theater, ballet and opera. So art in that sense is not really Art but a Culture, being marketed to the wealthy elite consumer. That has not worked very well. The only way the arts have survived is from government funding and a constant flow of donations from the super rich. In schools, this stilted view of the arts is maintained, yet Art and/or Music are the first things cut in the budget. That says a great deal about the hierarchical class structure in America and the economic value that is placed on the Arts by middle class administrators. If a school has Art or Music, it is not integrated into the curriculum. To add to the problem, Cartooning is not acknowledged as being a legitimate art form, much like Rock 'n' Roll has been treated in music. For at least two generations these two art forms have been popular with kids but not with teachers or administrators. Instead of competing with popular culture for the minds of children, teachers have simply tried to ban it, or pile on enough homework that there's no time to engage in it.

Ancient education in Greece and Egypt not only had the arts at the core of the experience, they were adapted to practical daily matters, using multimedia presentations. An example from John Anthony West's, Serpent in the Sky, concerning the Rhind Papyrus: "I go down three times into the hekat (bushel), a third part of me above myself. I leave fully satisfied. Who said that?" The answer can be explained orally or in writing, with word symbols or mathematical symbols, and drawn out in geometry. The statement itself is a scenario, part of a larger story, involving the action of a specific character. This reflects the attitude in the leadership of the society that we learn by acting out the information presented to us. The Pharaoh and the Priests were performers. Information was transferred to the masses at the theater. The theater itself was built in such a way as to be visually and acoustically harmonic, aligned to the heavens and the earth. With such

applied knowledge, it ceased to be just another building. It became an icon, a temple. Performances were made in reverence to their ancestors, and for the enlightenment of their children. They had a great sense of humor, and the hieroglyphs are cartoons.

## PART 6. NEW LEARNING, INSIGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

This was new learning for me. But everything here is sitting on the shelves of every library on the planet. So, I have been asking for a long time, how is it possible that those in education could let so much become so lost? Why have they allowed us to live, work, and play at the whim of land barons, advertisers and television programmers? The answer seems to be that they don't consider any of it to be their problem or responsibility. But that is not how I have approached education, and in my experience, I have not found the fault to be with teachers. The fault lies with administrators that spend their time begging for state and federal monies that have strings attached, rather than creating intellectual properties that have economic as well as philosophic value. The fault lies in the creation of a supposedly intellectual product that requires families to get a second mortgage on their house in the hope that their child can escape the emptiness of their own daily routines.

When you look at my Startooning program and you wonder how its creation might be considered college level learning, try to see what is hidden within it. The five pointed star is the visualization of Phi, that mysterious pattern found only in living things. You won't notice it unless you measure it. You won't learn it unless you draw it. The characters have been designed to geometrize your mind, which helps you learn other things. If you had been drawing them all your life, your brain cells would have grown differently. Neurons that are not connected would have been. As you read these

words, you will have one of three reactions. The first possibility is that you won't get it or won't care. If that is your reaction, hopefully you do not have a career in education.

The second is that you already knew this stuff and you are irritated that I have discovered it, because you have the ethics of a tobacco company, smugly keeping this knowledge for yourselves, enslaving a nation and a planet for your own power. The third response is that you will be amazed at the simplicity of it and angry about what has been purposely kept from you. The realization of what could have been, and what could be different for your children and grandchildren will begin to overwhelm you. I'm looking for you. Together, we have a lot of work to do.

## LEARNING HISTORY

At the age of eight, after a trip to the coal mines with my father to learn about the family business, I began looking for an alternative future. Seriously. And it was a no-brainer: Animation. I had always assumed that I would grow up to be an artist of some kind. My grandmother was an art teacher and my mother had been an art major in college. As I was starting to play Little League baseball, it seemed that a different path was being prepared for me. It had something to do with being a boy and growing into manhood. That's why it seemed appropriate to tell my father what I wanted to do and ask for his help. I was lucky that he had always been interested in art and was a self-taught cartoonist. It had just never occurred to him that he, or anybody else, could really make a living at it. But he was very supportive. So, when I asked him to teach me how to draw Disney's three little pigs, he taught me how to draw everything.

## Personal Learning Experience 1

My dad used a unique approach to teach me how to draw my first character. We sat down and looked at a picture book of the three little pigs and he asked which pig I liked best. I chose the pig that built the house of brick. We talked about that picture. He pointed out to me that it was a painting, not a drawing. He explained the printing process of the book, which allowed the artist to work much larger than the image we were now looking at. He took out a magnifying glass so we could see how it really looked. He then pointed out to me that the printer created the tiny dots, not the artist. The illusion of depth and roundness, highlights and shadow, were what the artist had done, using a paintbrush and watercolors. Our first job was to determine what parts of it could be drawn with a pencil. Making that decision caused us to look at the outlines of the character, his appendages and clothes. Dad said the trick to all this was to draw those parts in the right position and proportion to each other. To do that we needed to measure. He then constructed a grid, drawn in pencil right on the page, across the pig. It was three inches wide by four inches high. There was a horizontal and a vertical line every quarter inch, making a 12x16 grid. On a large piece of poster board, he drew another 12x16 grid, with the lines an inch apart. Then he told me that he would show me how to draw the pig by drawing the big bad wolf. He drew a grid around the picture of the wolf, drew a larger grid on another poster board and we began together. "Let's start with the eyes," he said, as he counted over the grid to where the top of the right eye intersected. He drew that eye, then the left, by first marking off every point that the eyes would intersect the grid, then drew the arcs through them. I then did the same, until he had drawn the wolf and I had drawn the pig. Then we marveled at our work and painted them.

## Bloom's ABC's related to Personal Learning Experience #1

### Affective Learning

The picture book had an accompanying record, which was the soundtrack to the movie. While we worked, we could hear and visualize the animation we had seen in the theater. This was very exciting and connected us to the action and emotion of the film in real time. I felt like I was doing something important, yet it was fun. At the same time I was learning something that I thought would take me years. Wow! It was amazing.

### Behavioral Learning

The technical procedure of drawing and painting the characters was simple but very valuable. After making what might be considered emotional or intuitive choices about the kind of character or art I liked, I learned to break it down into smaller, more manageable parts before attempting to recreate it. I saw the value of measurement and the importance of the sequence of steps one needed to go through to visualize something. Then I learned the differences in the media of pencil and paint. The feel of the tools, drag of the brush, consistency of the liquid, drying time. Breathing was important. If you took a breath while moving the pencil or brush, the path of the line would be altered.

### Cognitive Learning

At the time I was truly impressed with the fact that my dad could be drawing one thing while teaching me to draw another. He did not have to do it that way. But the result of his decision was that I did not compare my own work to his in a competitive way. When it was done, I also knew I did it myself and felt a greater sense of

accomplishment than if I had been copying his work. I was already copying a Disney drawing, but in the process my dad had shown me how to observe, analyze, delineate and draw most anything. So it wasn't long before I could apply those skills to my own creations. It would be years before I asked myself how he knew to do that, but by then I was writing his eulogy. Perhaps by writing this I will help some other child learn a little more, a little faster.

## Personal Learning Experience 2

This story is from the first week I became a teacher:

As a member of the Chicago Learning Exchange, I volunteered to give twelve workshops to two dozen 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders, immersing them in the daily activities of a commercial artist. At the end of my first workshop, an overview of the industry, I asked the students what they would most like to learn in the following weeks. All but one asked me to show them how to draw their favorite cartoon characters. The other wanted to draw hockey players. I had not anticipated their focus would be so cartoon oriented. At that time my portfolio was very diverse. I had never drawn many of the images they requested.

Together, we made a list of the characters. Their homework assignment was to gather comics and other information about them. My homework was to learn how to draw them, so that I could then teach them. The list included Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus and Lucy, from Charles Schulz' Peanuts comic strip. There were Bugs, Daffy, Tweety, Sylvester, Wyle E. Coyote and the Roadrunner, from Warner Brothers, Tom & Jerry from MGM, Yogi Bear, Astro, and Fred Flintstone, from Hanna-Barbera, Disney's Mickey and Minnie, Batman from DC Comics and the Incredible Hulk from Marvel.

First, I determined what all the characters had in common, then itemized their differences and ranked them by difficulty. I then drew them, minimizing their details so that each could be drawn in less than five minutes. As it turned out, many of the students had selected characters that were too difficult for them to draw without considerable practice. The drawing method that I had been taught was to block out the major shapes of a character, then gradually add details after the geometry had been refined. This approach created frustration, failure and boredom.

I tried starting with the nose or eyes as a reference point, then building the face around that, then the head around the face, then the torso and limbs. Some of the characters were still too difficult, so I began designing my own preliminary characters, each in a similar position, adding a different feature or facial expression, as the sequence became more complex. A series of characters emerged, specifically designed so they could be easily drawn by almost anybody. Children with less skills could be given a different sequence, but still succeed, see measurable progress and feel a sense of accomplishment. The drawing steps could be applied to any character, regardless of complexity, even a photo of a hockey player. This worked so well that I still use the approach today with students of all ages.

The learning I experienced did not stop with the development of drawing sequences. Success in attaining one little goal led to a desire for further learning, built confidence, increased self-esteem and even created joy for both the student and myself.

## Bloom's ABC's related to Personal Learning Experience #2

### Affective Learning

Before meeting these students, I approached things as a marketing man, trying to extract information to help me design popular characters that would make me rich.

Within a few days I began to care about these kids as people, their happiness, and their futures. I then realized that I could help them grow, change and enjoy life. It also became apparent that instructional design was more entertaining to me than entertainment.

### Behavioral Learning

By being willing to help other people, I was more ready to try new things and, as a direct result, I improved my own visualization and drawing skills. The instructional sequences I designed helped other people to draw quickly and well. They also provided a visual learning hierarchy by which I could quickly evaluate student skill levels and perceptual problems, without causing apprehension or embarrassment.

### Cognitive Learning

Through this experience I learned new ways to think about drawing, teaching and learning. I also stumbled across the geometric foundations of visual humor. I learned that drawing and humor could be casually integrated into the study of other subjects at the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. I learned that drawing cartoons could enhance observation and visualization skills, and be transferred to the drawing of more realistic things. The discussions that students had about their drawings and the situations depicted in the drawings led them to other learning experiences in verbalization, writing, spelling and conceptualization.

There are at least two levels of learning that occur while teaching that are beyond the

skills learned while participating in the drawing activities. One level is concerned with principles of instructional design and sequencing of learning objectives. Another is concerned with student interest and response, and the integration of visual learning with other subjects. Both levels can be shared with other teachers.

### Personal Learning Experience 3

By word-of-mouth and at the urging of my friends I began traveling more and giving half-day workshops at schools, to both teachers and students, including some with various disabilities. The greater the variety of visual possibilities I had at my disposal, the greater the chances for success, regardless of the limitations of the group. I can tell many stories that are simultaneously sad and joyous. This one had lasting impact and changed the direction of my life.

On my agenda was a school for the hearing impaired. It was the first time I was to visit a residential facility, and my first encounter with a large group of children with disabilities. I really didn't know what to expect. It was an old building, dark with high ceilings. The chalkboards were still black. I was assigned an interpreter that would sign for me while I spoke. After a preliminary meeting, the children were ushered into the room. In single file came a quiet column of little kids with big metal boxes harnessed to their chests. From the boxes came long thick wires connected to their ears, like doctors' stethoscopes. Most of them couldn't speak. They just made strange noises.

During my opening remarks I was standing too far from the interpreter. They kept looking away from me to see what I was saying from the sign language. This was not going to work if I wanted them to watch me draw. So I told the interpreter to tell

them to just do what I did, then asked her to sit down and do the same. There was an eerie silence until I had them show each other their drawings. Then there was natural laughter, but with no conversation between outbursts. At the end of class, one by one, silent but smiling, each of them came up and kissed my hand before they left the room. I broke into tears, and in fact am crying now as I type, just from seeing the images again in my mind.

### Bloom's ABC's related to Personal Learning Experience #3

#### Affective Learning

Just seeing the children come into the room impacted me emotionally. There was a rush of realization that they could not survive alone in any school I had attended or visited. At that moment the casual cruelty of the world I knew hit me like a hammer. The next thing that crossed my mind was why hadn't anyone told me about the place or shown me pictures of the kids or in some way prepared me for the impact? Then I began to notice that the three women in the room spoke softly, almost in whispers, rather than at a normal pitch, like they were in church. I wondered if they were in nun training. When the children began to laugh I was saddened that they couldn't hear their own collective joy. When they kissed my hand I was humbled beyond anything I had ever experienced. I didn't feel like a king or a pope. I wondered why kings and popes let anyone do that. I discovered that there was a secret world sitting in the middle of a suburban business district, the likes of which had never crossed my mind. I wondered how many others there were, around the next corner, or in the next town. My perception of the world had instantly changed. I was in shock and almost terrified at the implications of this.

## Behavioral Learning

Unlike at any other school I visited, I was stunned and sad. I immediately realized that I didn't want this to show. At the same time I knew that I couldn't perform my same old dog and pony show. What got in my way were my own words. I literally realized that I couldn't play this one by ear. I had to play it by eye. Nothing I said would be as important as what I drew. So I created new imagery to fit the current situation. In my attempts to develop a more extensive visual vocabulary, and with a desire to interface those visuals with academic subjects, I had begun experimenting with different facial expressions in my lessons. Here I thought of Marcel Marceau and decided to see how many emotions we could draw and how much we could exaggerate our faces.

## Cognitive Learning

This began the next phase of my Startooning program, called Alphabet Faces. As it unfolded in front of me, creating funny faces, then labeling them with appropriate words beginning with each letter of the alphabet, provided a quick, reference to alter the facial expressions of any character. This also created a system to organize synonyms for the expressions, which helped build vocabularies. For the hearing impaired, it provided a vocabulary of emotions that could be symbolized in hand signs. This was the first time that I thought of my work as a true alternative language, and how important it might be for people with disabilities. My work no longer seemed frivolous and self-centered. It had been given a greater purpose than I had ever imagined. I began to wonder about how they taught English to this population. How did sounds translate into hand signs? How did they make a language out of that? Could these kids grow up to be artists?

## Reflections

My grandmother started me out on this artful path of life. My dad was instrumental in helping me organize my skills. When I was twelve, knowing I was serious about an animation career, he arranged a special visit to the Jam Handy animation company in Detroit. After a lengthy tour, one of the artists handed me a caricature of myself as a memento. It served as my inspiration and still hangs on the wall between the caricatures my dad did of himself and my mom. In fact, I'm looking at them right now. When I was in junior high it was difficult to find any information about animation as a career. There was only Disney's school in California and a couple of correspondence courses. I sent away for one advertised on a matchbook cover, and I collected comics, learning to draw the characters on my own. I won awards for a Halloween window painting and a Christmas card design. During the holidays, I dressed as an elf and did paint-by-number pictures in an art store window, and was paid in art supplies. With that notoriety one of my mom's friends actually paid me to do portraits of her dogs. Then kids paid me to do custom cartoons on sweat shirts. I was published in the college literary magazine and designed ads for the local newspaper. I have worked as a professional graphic artist since the age of nineteen. I've done convention booths, sculptures, puppets, t-shirts, dresses, murals and vans. As a result I've learned just about every media and material you can imagine. I never thought about teaching until I was asked to do so.

It's been thirty years since I started teaching. The difference between my career and that of the average teacher is that the first subject I began teaching was originally designed for my daughter. So it was done out of love for a small child, rather than created by an academic committee. From then on everything I've done came from student and teacher requests, rather than curriculum requirements. I've integrated the arts into schools that had none, due to budget cuts and just plain ignorance. One day, after teaching a room full of five-year olds to draw their favorite cartoons, I was approached by an elderly teacher, who witnessed the event. She told me that it was not possible to teach children how to draw until they were eight years old, because their brains were not yet sufficiently developed. Another teacher in the room was annoyed that the children were laughing, making so much noise, that after I left she would be faced with the task of getting them interested in their important subjects and dealing with the behavior problem that I had created. Although times have changed, there are still teachers with that attitude.

As can be seen in my learning experiences, there has been the same interest in, and reaction to, the learning of art skills across at least three generations. Whoever taught my father to draw learned from someone else and passed it on. It required no texts, nor even an oral tradition. It is an ancient visual rite, which I have been honored to carry on. As I look back on my life, I see ten thousand smiling faces, of different colors, from different places, speaking different languages, with different learning styles, struggling to make sense of their educational systems, economic possibilities, political ideologies, and uncertain futures. According to mister Kolb, I'm in the career field suited to my learning style. But I have to wonder how many of those ten thousand survived the battle. And why did our lives have to be a war in the first place?

### KOLB'S LEARNING CYCLE applied to Experience #1

1. Experience. My dad and I sat down with a picture book of the Three Little Pigs so that he could teach me how to draw the characters.
2. Observation. We looked at the characters and noticed that they were painted, with highlights and shadows, giving a three dimensional realism to them.
3. Conceptualization. I imagined what the outline of one of the pigs might have looked like if it was just a pencil drawing.
4. Experimentation. Using a pencil, I sketched the outline of the pig on a separate piece of paper.
5. Experience. Dad and I compared my drawing with the painting.
6. Observation. I could see that the proportions of my drawings were not accurate.
7. Conceptualization. I imagined where the changes needed to be made on specific areas of the pig. The head, for example was too large. Should I make it smaller, or make the other parts larger to match the size of the head?
8. Experimentation. Using a ruler, I measured the parts of my pig and compared the measurements to the image in the book.
9. Experience. Dad and I constructed a grid over the character in the book and another grid, twice as large, on a sheet of poster board.

10. Observation. I was surprised that the blank grid, 6 x 8 would hold four of the pigs in actual size, and we had drawn it only twice as large. Dad pointed out that we made the grid twice as large in two directions, which made it four times as large.
11. Conceptualization. It seemed to me that mathematics and language didn't quite fit together, to give the appropriate meaning to something. Why would we say something was twice as large when it was really four times the original size?
12. Experimentation. We picked a spot on one of the eyes, looked at where it was in relationship to the grid lines, and I drew it lightly on my grid.
13. Experience. Dad suggested that we number the grid lines, starting with zero at the upper left corner of the grid, then labeling each line, from left to right in sequence. We then did the same thing to the lines from top to bottom.
14. Observation. I noticed that I had drawn the eye of the pig in the wrong box.
15. Conceptualization. I realized that, with so many unlabeled lines, it was an easy mistake to make. I considered what a simple, yet clever, activity it was to label things.
16. Experimentation. Using the newly labeled grid, I put points on the blank grid that corresponded to the intersections of important body parts.
17. Experience. I drew light pencil lines connecting all the points.
18. Observation. I could now see the proportions of my pig were accurate. But the subtle curves in each line were not.
19. Conceptualization. I considered that this was a very meticulous and time consuming process. It seemed a more scientific skill than an intuitive talent. I began to wonder if it would become less tedious and more fun with practice.
20. Experimentation. Using I tried using different kinds of erasers and pencils to determine which made the darkest lines and would be the easiest to erase.

### KOLB'S LEARNING CYCLE applied to Experience #2.

1. Experience. At a workshop, I was asked to teach 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders how to draw twenty characters: Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tweety, Sylvester, Wyle E. Coyote, Roadrunner, Tom & Jerry, Yogi Bear, Astro, Fred Flintstone, Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Batman, the Incredible Hulk and a hockey player.
2. Observation. From my collection of resource materials, I observed that all the characters were anthropomorphic. That is, they all had two arms, two legs, stood upright and walked like people. Their primary differences were in body proportions, relative size,

levels of realism, and line style. There were not many drawings of all the characters in the same pose, which made it difficult to compare their relative proportions.

3. Conceptualization. I imagined that it would be easier to learn how to draw the characters if they were all in a standing front pose.

4. Experimentation. Using my resource materials, I measured the major shapes of the characters and drew each on a separate sheet of paper, in a simple front view about eight inches high, with an even unstylized line. I avoided perspective, flattening them, and minimizing detail. From my own experience drawing them, I sorted them by difficulty.

5. Experience. I showed my students the procedures I went through. While this approach worked for my own rough sketches, some of the characters were still too difficult for the limited skill level of the students. The procedure created frustration, failure and boredom. They expected to do it faster, with greater accuracy.

6. Observation. I looked at their drawings and was amazed at the differences in visual perception and drawing abilities. What I was doing was not working for some of them.

7. Conceptualization. I looked at my drawings again and realized that before they could draw Mickey, they first had to learn how to draw a mouse. Before they could draw Batman, they first had to draw a man, just as I had. It appeared to me that those students that were visual learners had already begun doing that on their own. The non-visual learners had not. I wondered if I could teach anything at all to that group.

8. Experimentation. I began designing my own preliminary characters, adding a different feature or facial expression to each. A sequence of drawing steps also emerged, which could be applied to any character, regardless of complexity. Since all the characters had two eyes, a nose and a mouth, I started with the nose or eyes as a reference point, then built the face around that, then the head around the face. The size of the head allowed me to measure each character to its own body in the traditional manner of establishing body proportions as so many "heads high". After establishing that, I added the arms, legs and tails as needed.

9. Experience. I tried the new system out in class. It worked. The students had a ball. The non-visual learners could draw their own mouse. The visual learners could draw their own mouse, or Mickey or Minnie, or Jerry.

10. Observation. I realized that the drawing sequence within each character was more critical to success than the choice of character or the order in which they were drawn.

11. Conceptualization. I wondered why this worked so well. Then I wondered why nobody else was doing it. I began thinking about how I might make a connection to other subjects, so that the drawing could be embedded in a course, rather than be seen merely as some unnecessary amusement.

12. Experimentation. I began designing different faces until I had enough of them to create my own alphabet of emotions. I could then connect the drawing exercises to vocabulary and spelling activities.

13. Experience. I showed the students how to draw different faces that could be used on most characters. We talked about what words we could use to describe them.

14. Observation. The teacher was more impressed with the vocabulary activity than with the drawings.

15. Conceptualization. I figured that, if drawing activities could be connected to English, it might be a helpful teacher tool, and any program I might develop would be better accepted in the classroom. Perhaps it would not just be seen as cartooning, which is generally regarded negatively.

16. Experimentation. I designed a blank comic book layout sheet, so students could add characters and dialogue, block out their own scenes and begin writing stories.

17. Experience. While this looked like fun to the students, it was very difficult. They were not happy with their results and neither was I.

18. Observation. The students imagined large environments with dozens of objects and casts of hundreds of characters. To do various scenes in comic book style, one must already be able to draw any object or character in any position, or have resource materials available to study. The students' conceptualizations were too grandiose for their writing abilities, and their writing was beyond their drawing abilities. This could take years.

19. Conceptualization. I thought back to when I was their age and realized I had intuitively and obsessively been visualizing and drawing since I was eight. By the time I was in fifth grade, being the class artist had become my identity. Nobody had ever asked me to show them how to draw, they just gave me things to draw and expected me to do it for them. I wondered if I could have taught them way back then, or if learning to teach was an entirely different skill. Hmmmm. My journey begins.

### KOLB'S LEARNING CYCLE applied to Experience #3.

1. Experience. During a drawing instruction workshop, at a school for the hearing impaired, I was giving my standard introductory remarks to the students.

2. Observation. The students were not looking at me. They were instead looking at the sign language interpreter, about ten feet away.

3. Conceptualization. I reasoned that if this behavior continued they would spend more time looking at sign language explanations of my drawings than actually drawing.

4. Experimentation. I moved closer to the interpreter, to determine if we were in the same visual proximity to the students, they could follow along without having to split their attention between the two of us.

5. Experience. I am now talking right next to the interpreter while she is signing.

6. Observation. I observe the students still paying no attention to me, fixed on the interpreter to see what important things I was saying.

7. Conceptualization. When I draw, I consistently turn my back to the audience, making comments about what I'm doing. I realize that for the hearing impaired, this will add another layer of visual activity which will get in the way of the drawing lesson.

8. Experimentation. Having never even thought about doing this, I tell the interpreter to sit down and that I would stop talking. Everyone would receive all the information from the sequential drawing activity alone.

9. Experience. I'm giving a drawing instruction lesson without talking. I'm drawing on a big blackboard. Other people need to see what I'm doing. I change my position relative to the drawing, so it's more viewable. I'm biting my tongue to keep from talking.

10. Observation. In a social, instructional setting this seems very unnatural. The silence is eerie. But it's what I do everyday when I'm drawing alone. So I relax.

11. Conceptualization. As I'm silently drawing on the board, I consider the world I have taken for granted all my life, the meaning of sounds, the joy of music, rhythm, the feelings that are triggered. I become conscious of my own relationship to the lines I'm drawing. I realize how boring I must be, especially viewed from the back.

12. Experimentation. I try to exaggerate my movements, like a mime, so that my motions lead to the lines I'm drawing, and that my body language is representative of whatever emotion the character possesses.

13. Experience. This consciously directed activity moves me away from my sadness. Between characters, I move around the room, stopping to look at everybody's drawings. When I see a particularly funny one I hold it up for the class.

14. Observation. There are smiles, laughter, and a few hand signs. They've been successful and are ready for more. The activity seems genuinely important to them.

15. Conceptualization. I believe that this group has a greater potential for present and future visual communications than any other group I've taught. I wonder what more I can give them today. What can I learn from them that will help me?

16. Experimentation. I ask the interpreter to ask them to tell me about their favorite cartoon characters. They are typical of any other group of grade school children.

I mentally categorize them by common traits as she names them.

17. Experience. I draw generic characters that combine the geometric commonalities of their favorites, but focus on more exaggerations that can be applied to the faces. When I'm done, they line up and kiss my hand before leaving. The interpreter notices I'm crying and tells me that it's their normal way of saying thank you.

18. Observation. They are not the same somber children that came into the room an hour ago. There are lights in their eyes and smiles on their lips.

19. Conceptualization. I wonder who taught them how to give their thanks. For me it was very humbling, but I question what motivated the headmaster?