

Illustrated Self Narrative Project Outline

Scale-Up Plan

Parts of Project

1.) Collecting, writing and editing narratives

Participating inmates train to interview their peers on the compound, helping the interviewees distill lessons learned from their life experiences. These lessons are then edited in a classroom setting.

Examples of self-narrative writing prompts: *Describe an experience (in your teen years) that taught you a lesson that can help a younger person live better. Describe a mistake you made and an important life lesson you learned from that mistake. What does 'successfully serving time' mean to you? What influences, relationships or thought patterns help you make positive decisions? Identify one goal you'd like to accomplish in the next 6 months and write out a list of concrete steps to accomplish that goal.*

Pre activity: Team members first create their own self-narratives. They build their personal timelines, reflect on and write out their milestones and learn about decision-making processes in young adults.

2.) Brainstorming visuals

Once a narrative is written and edited, the students plan the visuals for the one-pager: The class generates ideas for the greyscale images inserted into the text on side 1 and the whole-page, line art graphic for side 2.

3.) Creating visuals

Workflow: A series of thumbnails are combined into pencil drawings which are composed and edited in Adobe Photoshop. The smaller, raster images are then prepared for side 1. The larger, line artwork for side 2 is converted from pencil to a vector graphic and recomposed/refined in Adobe Illustrator. The one-pager is then published in Adobe InDesign.

Considerations: To scale up the project, we need to accelerate the image-making part of this process by involving other artists. (See *the Self-narratives written and ready for visuals* section below.) We will continue to solicit help from art programs at local universities, but we also have a pool of talented artists in our inmate population to draw from, transforming this project into a valuable vocational training opportunity.

This vo-tech approach will provide inmate-trainees with marketable, self-employment skills as they learn to create images for print and web using industry-standard software. Adobe Certifications, earned by passing performance-based exams, are recognized world-wide by employers and gig-working hubs in the digital media field. *Adobe Certified Professional* credentials may be obtained in Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign to prepare students for careers in Graphic and Visual Design, Web Imaging, Illustration and Print and Digital Media Publication. (Also see *Future directions.*)

4) Printing

Since each final product includes two small, grayscale images and one large, vector graphic, a standard b/w office copier outputs sufficient print quality and printing onto standard cardstock produces a page durable enough to hand color. However, the more cost-effective approach for *high volume* printing is probably offset. (In March 2023, the Calhoun CI Graphic Arts/ Printing program produced for us, a run of high-quality, self-narrative, booklets with full-page, grayscale artwork.)

5) Distribution

The one-pager is then made available at various locations on the CI compound and offered to teens through at-risk youth programs in the community along with coloring contest information.

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6) Coloring Contest

At distribution points, flyers are posted, publicizing the youth coloring competition including descriptions of prizes, judging criteria and submission deadlines. Community youth who participate in the contest, do so anonymously, submitting through their program staff (who withhold identifying information and create an internal key to identify entrants). Contest submissions are displayed and judged at the CI and in the community and the inmate author is given a laminated copy of the winning, colored version of his self-narrative for his vision board.

Brief description

Our Language Arts curriculum at Wakulla Correctional Institution's Annex Education Department includes a self-narrative writing component. The men write and edit personal narratives in which they share lessons they learned from life experience (focusing on teen years). After an extensive editing process, we brainstorm visuals and create a one-pager with text and line-art and hold a coloring contest. All stories and coloring contest entries are anonymous and include no identifying information.

Self-narratives written and ready for visuals

Getting help: *Admitting defeat, the power of humility.*

Family dynamics: *Identifying and healing dysfunction.*

Study skills: *Avoiding Distractions, focusing techniques, conquering test anxiety.*

Character: *False power, changing the way we think, how our vocabulary defines us.*

Physical health regimen: *Workout routines, avoiding sedentary lifestyles in prison*

Mental health regimen: *Positive self-talk in negative situations, benefits of support groups*

Relationships: *Identifying the qualities of a good friend, rebuilding broken relationships*

Avoiding pitfalls of teen years: *Setting and acting upon priorities, planning for adulthood, healthy friendships*

Life hacks: *Keeping promises or resolutions, developing a habit of good decisions, having realistic expectations*

Potential collaborators (Organizations showing interest)

Capital City Youth Services, Tallahassee

Wakulla High School Art program, Crawfordville

Trinity United Methodist Church, Tallahassee

FSU Department of Art Therapy, Tallahassee

FAMU Sociology and Criminal Justice Dept., Tallahassee

Future directions

The series of one-pagers may be compiled into a *Life Lessons* coloring book and made available to the community.

The illustrated, self-narrative format is also well-suited for web animation or motion graphics, two social media art forms that are inherently more captivating for our youth.

Moreover, expanding technical training of inmates into the *motion design* vocational areas will further equip them with high-demand skills and credentials that leverage reliable employment and self-employment opportunities. In addition to the Adobe certifications listed further above, *Adobe Certified Professional* credentials may also be earned in Adobe AfterEffects, Premiere Pro and Animate, preparing students for careers in Motion Graphics, Web Animation and User Interface Design.

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