Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

Senior Stories unites emerging high school artists and senior citizens in an intergenerational project aimed at building bridges between the young and the experienced. Using their art portfolios as the primary means of communication, students share their experiences with seniors in a one to one exchange. Students then encourage seniors to tell their life stories, and as they do, the students sketch portraits of the storyteller, incorporating into the compositions those incidents and episodes most important in the seniors' lives.

The program takes place over the course of four weeks, after school, in a residential nursing home. After the initial group meeting, student and senior partner usually meet in the senior's room, for a weekly session of about two hours. The program is teacher monitored. Paintings and prints which evolve are completed in the school's art studios. An exhibition and reception for the seniors and students is held at the nursing home, with friends and family joining in the celebration.

Senior Stories incorporates the following objectives:

- to bring the visual arts out of the studio and into the community
- to demonstrate the visual arts as a form of communication
- to bridge the generation gap and teach both the young and the experienced that each has art important place in the community
- to create a program which teaches young artists the importance of giving back to the community
- to demonstrate to students the power of the visual arts in recording history and transmitting stories
- to continue the story of immigrants working and building new communities (the seniors involved represent the Western European immigrants who settled our community in the early 20th century. The students involved represent the "new immigrants" who are settling our community as we approach the 21st century; seniors and students have walked the same hallways of the community's schools and some of the tales told are remarkably similar!)

The practice is innovative in its goal to reach out to an often forgotten segment of the community - those no longer able to get up and around of their own accord and may be alone except for their "family" of residence friends. It is easily replicable in any size district. Senior citizens in residential facilities, in nursing homes, adult day care centers, assisted living communities or long term care are eager for someone to visit and lend an ear just to them alone. Administrators of such facilities welcome young people who fill that need; particularly artists, sensitive to the yearning of so many elderly to feel needed and important and who can create visual stories from their partners' reminiscences.

A complete description of the practice, along with sample letters to establish participating locations, as well as "ice breakers" used by students to encourage conversation with Seniors is available.

Describe the educational needs of the students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standards.

Emerging artists need to team how to work cooperatively with people from all segments of life and to appreciate that the efforts of others has paved the way for their own chances at success. They also need to know how greatly art speaks to all entire community and how vital it is to keep that community alive by nourishing it with their own artistic talents. *Senior Stories* allows these needs to be met. Each of the Content Standards in the Arts is addressed through *Senior Stories*. In their art classes, students learn about aesthetics and how to formulate an aesthetic response to a piece of work. As artists, they learn how powerful their portraits are in communicating to the viewer visual stories about their Seniors. They learn how they create their compositions and what they depict in them can evoke specific emotional responses. *(1.1)*

All students created portraits and each selected the media which he/she felt would best translate his/her initial renderings into a final image. Portraits created through printmaking processes, as well as those created through traditional painting techniques were part of the final exhibit. (1.3)

As they progressed through this program, students realized that successful completion of their artworks was important well beyond the normal reasons of satisfying themselves or satisfying their instructors. They came to realize how important these portraits and the stories they told were to the people they represented. Therefore, students created to the best of their technical abilities, applying the skills which they practiced in class to their final compositions. (1-2)

Critique (1.4) took place on many levels during the exhibit and reception held. Students offered constructive critique of each other's works in terms of composition - how well the elements and principles of design worked together to achieve unity; the painting or printing or drawing technique applied; the approach utilized: representational (realistic) versus emotional and perhaps, somewhat fantasized. The Seniors observed their portraits and immediately responded, "I don't look like that! or "That really is me!" Or, some, noticing a background image of a happy or sad memory responded with tears. Seniors observing their friends as subjects sometimes picked up a color they saw their contemporaries often wear or a piece of jewelry. In the words of the descriptive statement of the standard (1.4), "Students engage(d) in and evaluate(d) multisensory learning experiences as both participants and observers."

The district's curriculum stresses the infusion of historical, social and cultural influences in all studio works. Through the "living histories" of the Seniors involved, students created works of art which communicated both their own and their subjects' "opinions, thoughts and ideas." (1.5)

The mounting of the final exhibit emphasized to students the need for design skills *(1.6)* so that each piece can independently and collectively tell the stories told. Also taken into consideration by the students were the height at which the works were displayed as well as the surrounding space, particularly in terms of the number of handicapped viewers and the necessary safety precautions (Workplace Readiness Standard 5).

Throughout the program, students engaged in critical thinking, decision making and problem solving (Workplace Readiness Standard 3) first, as they formulated questions to Seniors to encourage them to tell their stories and then "organizing, synthesizing and evaluating the information" to select that which best told the story and fit the composition.

Workplace Readiness Standard 4 which addresses self-management skills was demonstrated both as students worked individually as artists, and also in partnership with a person whom they had just met who was of a different age and in many cases, a different race, religion, ethnicity and gender. Respect between partners was evidenced throughout. Students were also well aware of the length of the program and met the required deadlines.

Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

There is no paper and pencil test which can assess the objectives of *Senior* Stories. Authentic assessment takes place during the exhibit and reception and during classroom critique sessions. The enthusiasm generated by the program among both the Seniors and the students demonstrated that a bridge had indeed been built between the generations. The artworks created loudly conveyed the stories communicated and the lives represented. Students spoke fondly of their new friends. They were awed by the physical ages of their partners. One young man said he had never spoken to anyone that old before. A ninety-two year old resident, during the reception, relayed stories of what it was like to grow up at the turn of the century, while students counteracted by relaying similar feelings about growing up at the turn of the millennium. The friendships begun were continued as students visited their partners during the rest of the year. The response of the other residents to the students' artworks was equally enthusiastic. They eagerly volunteered to be part of our next session. For the students, it was immensely satisfying to know how well they were accepted and how much their work was appreciated.

The local newspapers covered the story and community leaders of Seniors' Organizations from local agencies have called with congratulations and interest to replicate. Letters from the nursing home expressed "deepest gratitude" and respect for the program which

taught students the importance of recognizing the contributions of those who came before them. Once again, the visual arts spoke to people and brought people together in a way no other forum is able.