**LIFE’s Learning Experiences are Planned in Consideration of the Following:**

**I.  Learning is a social, active process**

·      Learning occurs in active and social interactions centered around *collaborative* and *cooperative* experiences. Collaborative learning is a method of teaching and learning where students work together to explore a significant question, while cooperative learning—a specific kind of collaborative learning—involves students working together in small groups on a structured activity. Collaborative and cooperative learning experiences provide students with the space and structure through which they can co-construct knowledge/understandings with their peers as well as foster interpersonal skills.

**II.  Learning is Authentic**

·      Authentic learning experiences are real-life (or simulated) tasks that provide relevant, useful, and meaningful opportunities for students to develop, practice, and foster their understanding of key concepts.

**III.  Learning is Scaffolded**

·      Influenced by Vygotsky’s (1935) "[zone of proximal development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zone_of_proximal_development)” and designed to promote deep understanding, instructional scaffolding is a teaching strategy where learners are challenged slightly above their current level of understanding, but are provided with the needed “scaffold” (support) to achieve the desired outcome.

**IV.  Teachers Facilitate Learning**

·      In stark contrast to the traditional view of teachers as *the* providers of knowledge, teachers at LIFE act as *facilitators* of knowledge creation; they provide the spaces and conditions for *students* to construct (and co-construct with others) their own understandings.

**Sample LIFE Learning Experience:**

***Who***: 16 4th year students interested in pursuing careers and/or degrees in Art History and/or Art Design upon high school graduation

**What**: Year-long course titled, “European Art Through the Ages (17th-21st century).”

*Do Now*

As soon as students walk into the classroom, they sit at their designated table groups. The students begin to work on the “Welcome Pass” that has been pre-placed at their tables. The “Welcome Pass” asks each student to think about the previous class session and asks students to write down at least one thing that he/she learned, one thing he/she found interesting, and to provide evidence to support their statements. These “Welcome Passes” serve as a formative assessment piece that teachers can use to gauge what students learned as well as guide future instruction. Students who finish the “Welcome Passes” early are invited to peruse the large art books at the center of each table. Each book contains hundreds of photos of famous European art pieces spanning the last four centuries. These books serve as a preview for what students will be learning and cue students into the day’s learning objective.

*Hook*

After several minutes, the teacher directs the students’ attention to the large SMART board at the front of the classroom. The teacher clearly states the learning objective (also displayed on the SMART board): “Today, we are going to be exploring some of the key characteristics of European Renaissance Art, and we will begin to explore how this movement has deeply influenced some of the art that we see today.” Making the learning objective explicit for students allows them to know (and be accountable for) what they will be able to do and understand by the end of the lesson.

After the explicit description of the lesson objective, the teacher will display a series of famous paintings/sculptures from the European Renaissance, including masterpieces from Giotto, da Vinci, Raphael, Botticelli, and Michelangelo. Before displaying the images, students will be asked to carefully study the pieces and think about the common characteristics that undergird all of the art. As the slide show plays, students will be encouraged to jot down their thinking on LIFE’s individual student laptops. After an initial first viewing, students will quickly discuss with their table group some of their preliminary thoughts regarding the commonalities of the art pieces. With these discussions in mind, students will watch the slide show again to see if any other salient “noticings” surface.

*Group Work Time*

Following the slide show, students will be given 20 minutes to work together as a table group to co-construct their initial understandings of the characteristics of European Renaissance Art as well as brainstorm how to present their co-constructed ideas to their peers. (Students will be given colored print-outs of the slide show should they wish to refer back them throughout the activity). At the end of the 20 minutes, each of the four groups will present their “findings” to the class. The groups can present their “findings” in any way they choose—orally, using Power Point, chart paper, etc.

With the instructional scaffolding provided by the teacher during the group work and the presentations, students will begin to uncover some of the following characteristics of European Renaissance art: the incorporation of more light, color, and shadow, the attempt to make works as true to life as possible, an emphasis on the human body, and a highly realistic linear perspective.

*Real World Application*

To help students understand how some of these characteristics have influenced contemporary art/design/architecture, students will spend the last portion of the class on a “Photo Hunt.” With their table groups, students will have 25 minutes to explore their school and local neighborhood block to search for 5 examples of architecture/design/art that demonstrate the influences of Renaissance Art. Students will be asked to take photographs of these five pieces (using the school’s mini iPads) and will show the rest of the class their 5 photographs, along with a rationale for each of their choices. If students finish early, they will be asked to think about how these Renaissance characteristics either influence their own work, or how/if they *might* begin to use some of these elements in their own art.

*Closing/Sharing*

The last portion of the class will be spent with students presenting their “Photo Hunt” to their fellow table groups. At the end of class, students will complete an “Exit Slip” where they will be asked to write down at least two characteristics of Renaissance Art. These “Exit Slips” will be handed in to the teacher who will use this to informally assess student learning and guide future instruction.