

VISUALIZER ACTIVITY

From Linda Paulson, Grafton, ND



The idea for “visualizers” came to Linda Paulson one day in her ninth grade language arts class when students couldn’t seem to grasp the meaning of James Thurber’s story, “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” (*Possibilities*, pages 11-18).

Clearly, the class needed a way to get in touch with its own hopes and dreams.

Paulson asked each student to bring a wire coat hanger to class the following day, and the first “visualizers” were born. The hangers were bent any way the students chose, so long as they could be worn on their heads in order to receive visions of their future. Today, class members plan ahead and bring all sorts of materials to school to decorate their vision receivers, which have become much more sophisticated. Paulson’s only stipulation is that only found objects can be used. Nothing can be bought.

Students wear their contraptions for an entire day (they get points for doing so). In Paulson’s English class, they get time to fantasize about possibilities for their own lives—living somewhere else, holding a particular job, or whatever—and then write about that fantasy (*Career Choices*, page 14). In other classes, teachers allow five or ten minutes on that day to pose a question related to their subject, and students again imagine a solution and write it down. They receive credit for their work in every class.

Although the hats are formally used only on this day, Paulson keeps them in her classroom, and students have permission to wear them “whenever they feel the need.” It gives them “a right to be playful,” Paulson says, and also breaks down barriers that can hold a young person’s imagination in check.

What a wonderful way to help students begin to get in touch with their own visions of their future.

Congratulations, Linda, on a fabulous idea!

CLASS PROJECT:

Build Your Own "Visualizer"

IDEAS OF WHAT TO BRING:

- Wire coat hangers (mandatory)
- Cotton balls
- Q-Tips
- Plastic utensils
- Paper cups
- Yarn
- Beads
- Colored paper
- Aluminum foil
- Straws
- Christmas tinsel
- Curly ribbon
- Soda pop caps
- Mesh from produce
- Strawberry baskets
- Toothpicks
- Leftover craft supplies

Be Creative!!

HELPFUL SUPPLIES TO HAVE AVAILABLE:

- Scissors
- Tape
- Glue
- Stapler



THERE IS NO NEED TO PURCHASE ANYTHING
HAVE STUDENTS DONATE LEFTOVER ITEMS FROM AROUND THE HOUSE.