

Hanging the High Street Gallery

Putting Ideas into Practice

Case Overview

Background

Teacher: Mr. Gil Gonzalez
Experience: First Year
Class: 7th Grade

Storyline

Gil Gonzalez is a first-year teacher who has come to teaching after spending several years as a graphic artist in a corporate design firm. Struggling with an array of classroom management and organizational problems, Gil is also trying hard to meet the many expectations his colleagues have for him. It is roughly one week before Gil is expected to have a collection of student artwork ready to hang in the High Street Gallery show, which he is coordinating. As the day of the show draws near, Gil's anxiety and frustration build. His students seem distracted, disorganized, and not particularly concerned about the timeline that Gil keeps presenting to them. Stressed by deadlines and frustrated by the daily realities that are inconsistent with his dreams of what teaching would be like, he turns to a veteran teacher for guidance.

Star Teacher Function: Putting Ideas into Practice

Some key ideologies and behaviors that comprise this function are:

- ❑ Star teachers can clearly articulate the generalizations they hold about what constitutes good teaching.
- ❑ Star teachers are able to transfer their ideas about good teaching into their daily classroom practices. Star teachers engage children with meaningful learning and are able to simultaneously explain the purposes of the learning activities they select. Star teachers are continually able to develop and improve themselves professionally.

For a more detailed description of this function, see pages 41-48 in *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* (Haberman 1995), which accompanies this series.

Other Topics and Issues

Although the main purpose of *Hanging the High Street Gallery* is to stimulate reflection on the star teacher function of *putting ideas into practice*, the case provides the opportunity for examining other issues and topics as well. These include student discipline, student motivation, classroom management, extra duty assignments and their impact on new teachers, and the value of collegial support of novice teachers.

Scene Summaries and Questions

Scene 1: A Tuesday in March. Gil's Visual Arts Classroom.

Summary: Gil Gonzalez is struggling to motivate his middle school visual arts students to complete a computer graphics project for an upcoming show at the High Street Gallery. With the show coming up in less than a week, Gil is beginning to feel quite anxious as many of the students are making little or no progress. Many of the students are off task, and Gil is struggling to capture their attention and communicate the importance of the project.

Possible Questions:

1. How would you describe Gil's emotional state at this point in time? Have you experienced similar emotions while teaching?
2. Do you have concerns about classroom management procedures in Gil's classroom? What suggestions, if any, would you have for Gil?
3. (TQ) If you were Gil, what would you do to get the attention of the students? Assuming you were able to capture their attention, what might your message be?

Scene 2: Moments Later.

Summary: Gil attempts to capture the students' attention by having them turn off their computers and turn their attention to the front of the room. He then tries to communicate the seriousness of the deadline the class is facing. Unfortunately, many students appear distracted and restless as Gill provides a detailed schedule of what must be accomplished before the "hanging" of the show.

Possible Questions:

1. Gil seems to be communicating his personal anxieties about meeting the deadline for the completion of the artwork. Do you think such an approach will motivate students? Why or why not?
2. The child at the end of the scene says exactly the opposite of what Gil has just taken pains to communicate. How would you respond at this point?
3. (TQ) Given the fact that Gil is a first-year teacher and has spent several years in the business world before becoming a teacher, what thoughts or feelings might he be having at this point in time?

Scene 3: The Same Day After School.

Summary: After school, Gil interacts briefly with the school janitor. Gil shares his frustrations and acknowledges his occasional thoughts of returning to his old job at the design studio.

Possible Questions:

1. Have you dealt with similar feelings about your choice of teaching as a career?
2. (TQ) What advice do you have for Gil? What specific actions would you recommend?

Scene 4: The Next Day.

Summary: The High Street Gallery show is one day closer, and little seems to have changed in Gil's visual arts classroom. While a couple of students seem to be making some progress, it is clear that many others have a long way to go. The lack of organization is even more evident than the previous day. Some students cannot find their work while others are having technical problems with their computers.

Possible Questions:

1. What specific techniques or routines would you recommend Gil try in an effort to solve the management problems he is experiencing?
2. How can Gil more effectively respond to the multiple demands of his students?
3. (TQ) Gil appears to be feeling anxious about the quality of the art work his students are producing for the High Street Gallery show. What other factors could be contributing to his anxiety?

Scene 5: The Following Monday. Visual Arts Cluster Meeting.

Summary: It is Monday, the day before the High Street Gallery show, and Gil is in a visual arts cluster meeting where it is quite evident he is under considerable stress.

Possible Questions:

1. What advice could you share with Gil about how to deal with the stress of trying to meet multiple deadlines?
2. (TQ) What do you imagine Gil might have been thinking during the meeting?

Scene 6: The Same Day After School. Gil Meets with His Ex-Boss.

Summary: Gil's former boss, Jan, is delivering art supplies to Gil that her company has donated to his visual arts program. Gil meets Jan in the school parking lot. Jan shares how excited she is that Gil invited her to be a judge at the High Street Gallery show and how much she is looking forward to seeing his students' work. Gil responds that he is not sure what she will be seeing. Sensing the stress that her friend is experiencing, Jan warmly reminds Gil that he has an open invitation to return to his old job but then asks if there is anyone in the school with whom he could share his concerns.

Possible Questions:

1. Gil apparently was a success in his professional career as a graphic artist. What does he need to complete a successful transition to classroom teaching?
2. (TQ) Where do think Gil is likely to find someone who can help him meet his professional needs?

Scene 7: The Next Morning. Gil Meets with Cluster Leader.

Summary: Gil seeks out his cluster leader, Liz, and shares the frustration and anxiety that he is currently experiencing. Liz assures Gil that she and other veteran teachers can

help him figure out ways to more effectively deal with the pressures and deadlines that are contributing to his stress. In response to Gil's revealing that part of his problem is that teaching just isn't what he thought it would be, Liz encourages him to articulate his vision of what he thought teaching would be like.

Possible Questions:

1. What strategies could Liz offer Gil to help him through this stressful time?
2. What could Gil ask for at this point that Liz might be able to help him with?
3. (TQ) What do you anticipate Gil's vision of good teaching to be?

Scene 8: Moments Later.

Summary: Gil proceeds to share his beliefs about good teaching, which include the ideas that learning should be fun and that it is the job of the teacher to help students discover their hidden gifts and talents. Finally, Gil adds that he had a vision of making a difference in kids' lives and that so far he doesn't feel that is happening. After affirming Gil's ideas, she suggests that he examine one of those ideas more closely. She suggests that she would like to hear more about what Gil meant when he said he wanted to make a difference in kids' lives.

Possible Questions:

1. What are your personal ideas about what constitutes good teaching? Can you explain how you translate those ideas into practice in your daily work as a classroom teacher?
2. What are your reactions to Gil's ideas about good teaching?
3. (TQ) What would be your response to Liz's probing question about "making a difference in kids lives?" Can you describe specific practices you employ toward that end?

Scene 9: Moments Later.

Summary: The conversation continues as Gil explains that he aims to develop the "artist" in all of his students and that he wants to make a difference by helping students discover that they are capable of achieving far more than they often imagine. Again, Liz pushes Gil's thinking, asking him to explain how he could accomplish those goals in the classroom. Gil answers by saying that it is a matter of holding students to high standards. Finally, Liz gently nudges him one more time asking Gil, "How do you do that?"

Possible Questions:

1. What is Liz attempting to do in her interactions with Gil?
2. How would you respond to Liz's final question?
3. (TQ) How do you think Gil will respond?

Scene 10: Moments Later.

Summary: The conversation ends with Gil saying that he wants kids to set high standards for themselves and find ways to live up to those standards. Liz again asks how this would look in his classroom practice, and Gil admits he does not know. Gil ends the scene saying that this may be the problem, that he does not know how to put his ideas into practice.

Possible Questions:

1. What specific practices can teachers employ to help students set high standards for themselves?
2. What is the most significant professional challenge Gil is facing at this point in his career?
3. How could Liz (or other teachers) help him with this struggle?
4. Have you had Gil's experience of recognizing that your ideas about teaching were incongruent with your daily experiences in the classroom? What feelings did that experience engender? How did you respond?

Hanging the High Street Gallery Video Case Transcript

Scene 1: A Tuesday in March. Gil's Visual Arts Classroom.

Gil: Okay, ladies and gentlemen, as I told you, and I have been telling you this for days, the High Street Gallery show is coming up. Wait, Gretal, sit down. Sit down, and just wait a second. Travis, Travis, the High Street Gallery show is a week from today, Travis. Okay? The High Street Gallery show is one week from today, and each and everyone of you needs to have your computer graphic piece finished. So that means what? Today is Tuesday. You have to be finished by Thursday so we can mat your work. Andy, are you going to put something up on your screen? You have to get working. Where did you put it last *(responding to a question from a student who has lost his diskette)*? Okay, keep looking. Can everybody look for Rembrandt in your disk box? Terry, look for Rembrandt. Chris, look for Rembrandt. *(Each student has the name of a famous artist that he or she uses in Visual Arts Class.)*

Gil: Terry, Terry, sit down. Terry, okay?

Terry: Can I use the rest room?

Gil: No, sit down, sit down. No, you can't use... Nooo! I already told you no. Hang on a second. I'll help you look. Put that in. Be quiet. *(All in response to a flurry of student questions.)*

Students: Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Gonzalez, my computer won't come on.

Gil: Is it turned on?

Student: Yeah.

Another Student: Mr. Gonzalez, can I get a drink of water?

Gil: No, go sit down. You can't have a drink of water right now.

Class: Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Gonzales.

Scene Two: Moments Later.

Gil: Okay, everybody stop. Stop what you are doing. Stop, turn the monitors off. Turn your monitors off and look up here. Jackie, just turn the monitor off right now! You don't need to save anything. Turn it off. Chris, you guys don't understand. Today is Tuesday. When's the show? Next Tuesday. We have two days to get your computer graphic piece finished. What is it ... Thursday? Thursday it's finished. Friday we mat it. Monday we tag it and take it over to the show. And Tuesday is the show. We put up the show on Tuesday! One week from today! We're going to have judges there from the Dayton Art Institute, from DVAC (Dayton Visual Arts Council), and if you guys don't do anything there isn't going to be anything there to judge. Okay? One week. Two days to get this thing finished. Now everybody get back to work. Turn your monitors back on. Get back to work. You have 15 minutes left for today.

Student: I thought the show was on Wednesday.

Gil: Sigh.

Scene 3: The Same Day After School.

Janitor: A bad day today?

Gil: Bad day, bad week, bad month. What, what month is this?

Janitor: That bad, huh? How long have you been doing this stuff!

Gil: Actually, it's my first year teaching.

Janitor: You're kidding.

Gil: No, I used to be in a design firm.

Janitor: You left that to come here?

Gil: Yep.

Janitor: Gee, I don't know. It would have to be better than this. Any chance of getting back into that business?

Gil: You know, sometimes I wish I could.

Janitor: Good luck to you.

Gil: Thanks.

Janitor: Catch you tomorrow.

Scene 4: The Next Day

- Gil:** Okay, Chris this looks good. Let me see. All right, I think you are going to have something finished by tomorrow. Great! Good job. Gretal where, where is your face (*referring to the computer screen*)?
- Gretal:** It's not working.
- Gil:** What do you mean it's not working? Try it. Load it up. Load it up. Let me see your face. You load it up, and then I'll come back and take a look at it. Terry, what's up?
- Terry:** I can't find my disk.
- Gil:** Did you look in here (*referring to a disk storage box*)?
- Terry:** I looked everywhere.
- Another Student:** Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Gonzalez
- Gil:** Keep looking (*to Terry*). Keep looking. It has to be here somewhere. April! What are you doing?
- April:** My math homework.
- Gil:** Your math homework? Your math homework? What do you mean, this is not math class. (*Gil then notices that Travis is off task and not working on his computer graphics.*) Here, Travis, back over there. (*Returning to April*) Didn't you print something out yesterday? Okay, where is it?
- April:** I don't know.
- Gil:** Did you look in that pile of stuff over there?
- April:** Yeah, it's not over there.
- Gil:** Okay, I think I put it on my desk. Go check my desk. It should be there. If it's not, then come back, okay? (*turning his attention to Travis once again*) Travis, I need to see your face on the screen. You only have until tomorrow. Tomorrow is it. That's all we have left. If you want to get something done, and you're going to get something done, you have to.

Load up your face. It doesn't matter. just load one of them up. It doesn't matter. just load one of them up. Okay, now get rid of that. That's not your face. You just covered it up. Load it back up and cut out a brush. John! What are you doing?

John: Huh?

Gil: What are you doing?

John: Nothing.

Gil: What is tomorrow?

Terry: I still can't find my disk.

Scene 5: The Following Monday. Visual Arts Cluster Meeting.

Liz: *(visual arts cluster leader)* We have several things on board this week to talk about. One of which is the *Roots of Culture* show. And Gil, I just wanted to remind you that you need to stop by sometime before the end of the day and get the pick-up from Dayton blueprint and then also drop the slides off at Etman's *(a film processor)* because Sinclair *(man helping coordinate the Roots of Culture show)* needs all that work by the second *(of the month)*. Well, one of the other highlights this week is the Hanging of The High Street Gallery. I've just been informed that we're going to have extensive PR coverage from the news. We'll also be having a visit from the mayor, and Paula Recko from DVAC (Dayton Visual Arts Center) and a representative from the Ohio Arts Council will be there. *(Gil's colleagues respond enthusiastically.)* They cannot wait to see the work the children have produced. And of course we have everything to owe to Mr. Gonzalez, who has been the chair person of that event.

Other

Teachers: Good job Gil. Great. Thanks Gil.

Liz: We do need, and I'm sure you have this on your list Gil, the name tags. We really need to have them ready so we can match the work up with the appropriate name and title of the artist. So, we have a lot to look forward to this week. And certainly grand PR that will just carry our school to another level and, certainly, a wide community sharing of what we're really about, and that's helping kids through the expression of the arts.

Scene 6: The Same Day After School. Gil Meets with His Ex-Boss.

(Gil is watching from back door of school building.)

Jan: *(Gil's ex-boss drives up in her car.)* Hey, Gil!

Gil: Hi, Jan. Right on time, just like always.

Jan: No problem, no problem. I have some things here for you. *(Gets box of donated art supplies from the trunk of her car.)*

Gil: Oh, wonderful! I really appreciate this, Jan, you know.

Jan: We have so many things around the office. We're always glad to donate things. I'm so glad you called.

Gil: Let's go up here and get out of the rain.

Jan: Okay. All right.

Gil: So there's a lot of stuff going on....

Jan: Really?

Gil: Yeah, to be honest, sometimes I wish I just had my old office back, back in my own space, not having to deal with ... hundreds of things....

Jan: I love to hear that. I love to hear that. But I know you really wanted to work on this job, and you really gave it some forethought. It was kind of a dream, wasn't it?

Gil: Yeah, yeah.

Jan: And it probably still is.

Gil: Yeah, I'm trying, I'm trying. Oh by the way, here's the judging criteria *(hands Jan the form)*. I really appreciate you coming to help out with that.

Jan: O.K. That's real soon, isn't it?

Gil: A little too soon, I think.

Jan: Do you think so? How are the students doing?

Gil: *(shaking head)* I'm not so sure what you're going to see. There's just ... I don't know. I don't know what's there. They can't get the stuff done, and I can't seem to help them and ...

Jan: Oh, you look so frustrated. Is there somebody here you can talk to?

Gil: I don't know. I've been kind of reluctant because everybody is so busy. They have their own stuff to do. I really want to try this on my own. I don't want to put any burdens on anybody else....

Jan: Good luck. I can hardly wait *(holding up envelope with judging criteria)*.

Gil: Okay, well, just bear in mind what I said about this, so come with an open mind. Okay?

Jan: I will. I will. See you soon.

Gil: Okay. Good to see you.

Jan: Bye.

Gil: Thanks again. *(Holding box of donated supplies.)* Bye.

Scene 7: The Next Morning. Gil Meets with Cluster Leader.

- Gil:** Hi, Liz.
- Liz:** Hi, Gil! How are you?
- Gil:** Well, not too good.
- Liz:** What's going on?
- Gil:** Liz, I'm *overwhelmed with* everything I have to do. It's falling apart. The show I have to do, that we have work for, yearbook pictures that I've have to try and organize, let alone 25 kids in the class. I don't know what is happening.
- Liz:** Slow down a minute. Slow down, *because sometimes, certainly* when we have deadlines, everything *seems like* it piles up. I can help you with that. I mean, Gil, *we've been* through it, and *there are* certain things and *strategies that* I can share that will help you clean up all that anxiety and give you some real strong pointers to deal with the deadlines and getting some structure and some *strategies that* can help you be better organized.
- Gil:** I think maybe the whole thing is that teaching isn't what I thought it was going to be, you know. I had all *these ideas* about how I was going to come in and do this and do that, and it's just not what I thought it was going to be.
- Liz:** Well, you're saying that at this point when you have a lot of *pressure. Certainly,* you have a lot of things that you're shouldering now. Your plate is full. We can help you through those things. But, I think we really need to re-look at you saying something about what you thought teaching would be. Maybe we need to spend some time and I need to hear exactly where you're coming from and your vision of what teaching was going to be like.

Scene 8: Moments Later.

Gil: Well, Liz, in my great vision of how I thought things were going to be, I thought I would come in here and everything was going to be fun, you know. Learning is supposed to be fun. Right?

Liz: I would agree with that.

Gil: Most days it's not at all. You know, creativity is inside everybody. And I feel that given the space, and the encouragement, and the supplies, that's all they need. They should go out there and create, and that's not happening at all. They're not doing anything when I give them that freedom, that space. And probably, I think the major reason is, I wanted to make a difference in these kids' lives, but I don't see that happening at all right now.

Liz: Okay, let's slow down just a little bit because you have some real valuable concerns. Let's back up just a minute. I'm glad you're airing this now, Gil, because that's the first step. Let's back up a minute and just take one of those at a time. You had mentioned, certainly, something about making a difference in kids' lives.

Scene 9: Moments Later.

Gil: I think, for me, making a difference means having these kids realize all the creative potential they have inside. You know, they're all artists, it's just a matter of getting it out.

Liz: You know, Gil, that's beautiful. I mean that's the essence of teaching, that's part of it. Let's go back to just how you are going to do that?

Scene 10: Moments Later.

Gil: I guess it's a matter of holding these kids to high standards. Most of the kids—they come in here and they want to do just enough to get by, and they have so much more than that. I want to bring them up to that level, to have them realize that they have to set goals high for themselves.

Liz: Gil, that's great. You're right on the mark. But how do you do that? How do you do that in a classroom?

Gil: I don't know.