

Open Children’s Door to Aesthetic Perception: A Case Study of the Characteristic Aesthetic Education Curriculum “Little Blue-and-white”

Shen Yehua

Primary School Affiliated to Nanjing Normal University Xianlin,
Department of Middle School

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Abstract:

The display of blue-and-white elements in the object-shaped space can put children in a context of beauty, and make them learn to taste beauty with multiple senses and with heart and soul. The multi-dimensional blue-and-white curriculum development inspires children freely understand beauty and boldly imagine how to create it. The implementation of vivid blue-and-white activity competition provides children with opportunity to express their creativity and share their aesthetic works in various forms. The eight-year exploration of blue-and-white aesthetic education has opened children's door to aesthetic perception and gradually formed the unique path and paradigm of Xianlin School Primary School Section of High School affiliated to Nanjing Normal University, which has promoted the establishment and development of aesthetic education on campus.

Key words: blue-and-white, modality of aesthetic education, strategic thinking

Based on the school-running philosophy with “happiness and elegance” as the core, Xianlin School Primary School Section of High School affiliated to Nanjing Normal University has comprehensively promoted the project plan *Little Blue-and-white Aesthetic Education curriculum Base Construction*, has conducted the exploration and practice of eight years focusing on the development and implementation of blue-and-white school-based curriculum, and has been pursuing the common growth of teachers and students and the characteristic development of school under the guidance of campus culture through the campus object-shaped environment establishment and the curriculum culture construction, forming a unique way of education by curriculum.

1. Curriculum visions: open children’s door to aesthetic perception

Everyone is endowed with aesthetic perception, but it must be cultivated through education to show its elegance. Our school is located in Xianlin University Town, surrounded by many colleges and universities, featuring strong atmosphere of humanism and abundant educational resources. However, it is a question how to integrate various superior resources and break through the bottleneck of characteristic development. Our school takes “Little blue-and-white” aesthetic education curriculum as an effective means of campus culture construction to carry out deep thinking and exploration.

“Little blue-and-white” is a kind of cultural metaphor, in which “little” means children’s innocence and loveliness with unlimited development potential. Our school starts with “little blue-and-white” characteristic curriculum construction, and opens children’s door to aesthetic perception and inspires their aesthetic taste through the artistic expression of blue-and-white, that is, simple color, lively lines and elegant artistic conception. Then, through field construction, curriculum development, activity organization, teacher training and evaluation guarantee, our school continues to deconstruct the blue-and-white aesthetic education theory, and gradually transfers the blue-and-white curriculum education model to other disciplines and integrates them, so as to rebuild our school’s aesthetic education landscape, enrich the campus “aesthetic education” practical path, and finally realize “going ahead towards beauty”, making aesthetic accomplishment become practice from theory.

2. Curriculum structure: cultivate a good aesthetic education ecology

From the perspective of children, the spatial construction, curriculum implementation and activity development of aesthetic education are all a part of the journey of children’s aesthetic education learning. With “little blue-and-white” aesthetic education curriculum as a starting point, teachers and children jointly design, experience and ponder over the journey of aesthetic education learning. “Little blue-and-white” aesthetic education curriculum is composed of six elements, including edification of beauty, appreciation of beauty, understanding of beauty, links of beauty, creation of beauty, and sharing of beauty, each of which goes through aesthetic education implementation and operation path, respectively, revealing the spiritual connotation of “happiness and elegance” culture. In the journey, children have realized joyful growth in an elegant aesthetic education environment. Our practice also provides schools with reference samples how to carry out projects like reading, folk music, martial arts and planting to promote “simultaneous education of five elements” of morality, intelligence, physical

education, beauty and labor.

2.1 Create object-shaped space to awaken children's senses of beauty

The blue-and-white teaching space is oriented to teachers, students and parents, from classroom to campus, from class to site, from campus to outside, from the passive to the active, from reality to network, a variety of fields have contributed to creating a simple, lively and elegant blue-and-white atmosphere, and building a blue-and-white achievement display platform. Therefore, students are able to wander between blue and white charm of the object-shaped space, to perceive the charm of blue-and-white, and improve their aesthetic accomplishment and realistic self-study ability.

2.1.1 Awaken the senses of beauty

Through scientific planning, our school has established three art classrooms, a blue-and-white theme classroom and a ceramic workshop, where children can learn art courses, appreciate blue-and-white works, and experience creation enjoyment by personally producing blue-and-white porcelain through communication and cooperation. Moreover, in each corner of our campus, a blue-and-white atmosphere is carefully created, and small campus attractions such as "blue-and-white all the way", "blue-and-white green shadows", and "blue-and-white mirrored on the door" are formed through ingenious setting, so that children's sense of mind can wake up in the natural sense and aesthetic system on the campus, and they will accept the call and enlightenment of beauty.

2.2.2 Construct fields suitable for learning

Now, our school is building a 150 square meters blue-and-white hall, "elegance and rhyme blue-and-white" hall focuses on displaying blue-and-white classic porcelain, mobile electronic screen presenting blue-and-white dynasty changes, and introduction to blue-and-white teacher team. "Little blue-and-white" hall mainly introduces craftsmen occupied in little blue-and-white, and shows excellent blue-and-white works of students. From a touch of blue and white color to the whole hall layout, children will subtly learn to perceive, appreciate and taste beauty with a variety of senses and with their whole body and mind, and will be edified by beauty in an immersive blue and white spatial field of elegance and rhyme.

2.2.3 Break barriers of time and space

We actively explore aesthetic education field outside the school, like offering students opportunity to observe Nanjing Museum, the School of Fine Art of Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications, and Nanjing University of Finance and Economics on site, and establishing ceramics off-campus bases in Gaochun, Nanjing and Yixing, Wuxi to widen students' aesthetic horizons and enhance their artistic vision. At the same time, with the help of the Internet, we establish a blue-and-white online teaching platform and a QQ aesthetic education group of home-school cooperation, and the WeChat public account "Blue-and-white Small World" is an extension of blue-and-white aesthetic education classroom, a display window for the

teaching process and the achievements of teachers and students, and also an aesthetic education platform for wider exchanges with our society.

2.2 Construct a unified curriculum, empower children with exploration of beauty

In our school, the blue-and-white characteristic curriculum proposal has been confirmed, and the integrated and open blue-and-white series curriculum has been conducted. After children have gone through much edification, appreciation, understanding of beauty, and then they start their “creation journey” of beauty, that is, creating aesthetic works, and linking aesthetic life and aesthetic world. Our school continuously develops and deeply explores series subject curriculum, empowering children with the exploration of beauty.

2.2.1 Popular curriculum for full participation

In every semester, a blue-and-white course is embedded in art class, in which children of different grades can learn popular knowledge about blue-and-white step by step, recognize and understand the different forms of beauty carried by blue-and-white, gradually learn to appreciate and evaluate beauty, and practice expressing and creating beauty after internalizing it. A small blue-and-white appreciation class is set up every semester to further cultivate children’s love for traditional art, enhance their national confidence, and improve their aesthetic taste and appreciation ability, adding value to the learning process.

2.2.2 Club-based curriculum for interest

It is an organic combination with the club courses offered by our school during the flexible departure time, which provides a once-a-week menu-style service for children interested in learning blue-and-white, like clubs about blue-and-white ink, blue-and-white clothing, blue-and-white paper quilling, blue-and-white sprinkling powder painting, etc. On the basis of satisfying students’ aesthetic taste, we continuously increase their aesthetic experience and improve their aesthetic ability.

2.2.3 Special-research curriculum for in-depth research

For children devoted to in-depth research of blue-and-white art, our school has set up more in-depth blue-and-white characteristic small classes. Under the guidance of curriculum, students can observe blue-and-white art of different styles in all ages, and carry out in-depth research on the difference between shape, color and pattern design, like “little teacher” forum and blue-and-white debate, all of which have given children the opportunity to speak out, and encouraged them to boldly and freely express, comment, understand and link beauty, so that imagination and thinking can go deep into beauty.

2.2.4 Integrated curriculum for blurring boundary

Our school has broken the barriers of different subjects, blurred their boundaries, and implemented “1+N” curriculum to promote children’s pluralistic development. For example, the

blue-and-white model in the science competition, the blue-and-white electronic tabloid in information class, the blue-and-white dragon dance in physical education class, the blue-and-white poetry in reading class, the blue-and-white dance in music class, etc., all have further improved children's aesthetic accomplishment, refine their sentiment, and warm their soul.

2.3 Carry out aesthetic education activities, lead children to the future

Our school is centered on children, adapts our education to their physical and mental development and changes, and creates a variety of rich and vivid blue-and-white aesthetic education activities for everyone. We have carried out special activities with the themes of "seeds of beauty", "blooming of flowers", and "harvesting of fruits", and built a series of campus culture courses to continuously expand the scope of courses. All the teachers and students are exposed to the context of beauty, and shrouded by the atmosphere of beauty, in which children confidently create, express and display the cultural experience and aesthetic education works of "little blue-and-white" in a variety of ways to share with everyone.

2.3.1 Sowing week, sowing seeds of beauty

"Sowing week" sows the seeds of beauty through family-school cooperation. Taking family as a unit outside the school, sowing week helps to find and perceive the blue-and-white charm during activities "searching for blue-and-white" and "museum tour", improve aesthetic accomplishment and enhance parent-child relationship. On campus, we actively develop the "Blue-and-white Boutique Appreciation Meeting", in which children can learn about the classic blue-and-white works of past dynasties, appreciate the artistic value, and cultivate their national self-confidence. Parent-child blue-and-white painting series activities are rich, such as "painting blue-and-white green plants", "painting blue-and-white well cover", "painting blue-and-white tray", "paying respects to father's day", and "painting Nanjing with blue-and-white", in which the seeds of beauty are sown, the form of artistic expression is innovated, and the aesthetic taste is activated.

2.3.2 Blooming season, blooming flower buds of beauty

In the blooming season, we take competition activities as an effective means to make students actively participate in art performances, provincial art education annual meeting, "Water Rhyme Jiangsu" design competition, and tulip sketching activity, all of which have given full play to the artistic growth level and ability of "little blue-and-white" and in which children can boldly express creativity. Through activities such as international exchange projects, "Friendship City Painting" on Jiangsu International Channel, Singaporean Round-table Conference, Australian Principals' Academic Visiting Group, Dutch Academic Visiting Group, International Student Charity Classes, Walking into Nanjing International School, etc., we have continuously accumulated children's aesthetic experience and improved their aesthetic ability, fully embodying children's simple, lively and elegant mental attitude, which can spread our blue-and-white culture to international friends, and meanwhile enhance our national self-confidence.

2.3.3 Harvesting day, harvesting fruits of beauty

In our school's blue-and-white hall that is near completion, we will organize blue-and-white gatherings and garden parties, invite college parents and blue-and-white volunteers to give lectures on blue-and-white theme, and conduct an awards ceremony summarizing the learning phase of blue-and-white. At the same time, a group exhibition of blue-and-white works, a solo exhibition of "small skilled hands", a "little teacher" forum, and a "little master" debate will be held in the hall to continuously improve children's appreciation and evaluation abilities, so that children can grow up into newcomers of the era going ahead to the future while carrying traditions.

3. Curriculum effectiveness: aesthetic education "becomes practice from theory"

Through eight years of practice and exploration, our "little blue-and-white" curriculum has been deeply rooted in the hearts of teachers and students, in which teachers, students and parents have been inspired by the beautiful vision of elegance and rhyme of blue and white, and our school has also gained fruitful achievements in connotation construction and characteristic development.

In all kinds of painting competitions, the number of our winners has reached more than 600 person-times. The blue-and-white classroom has received Dutch Academic Visiting Group, Australian Academic Visiting Group of Association of Principals of Victoria State, Singaporean Principal Round-table Conference, etc. Nanjing excellent young teachers, Nanjing excellent education workers, blue-and-white characteristic teachers, and blue-indigo project excellent masters and apprentices have all gained improvement in the "little blue-and-white" aesthetic education curriculum base construction. In 2020, our school won the title of "elegance and rhyme blue-and-white" characteristic project school in Qixia District, and Jiangsu International Channel has interviewed and filmed the news about blue-and-white characteristic education twice in our school, which was highly appraised by experts at provincial and municipal levels. In 2021, our school passed the defense of "little blue-and-white" aesthetic education curriculum base in Jiangsu Province. Blue-and-white has formed a unique aesthetic fashion on campus, and "aesthetic education becoming practice from theory" is no longer just a myth.

About the author:

Shen Yehua is a senior teacher, director of Curriculum Center, who works at Primary School Affiliated to Nanjing Normal University Xianlin Department of Middle School.