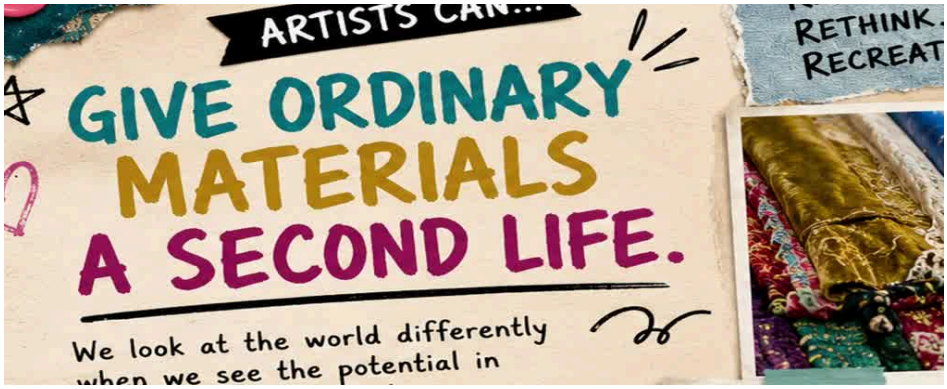


https://youtu.be/bON_SFowH4k?si=hZUqrZJqcwBP3yVn

REPURPOSED BAG MAKING WORKSHOP | THE EDUCATION FUND EXPO

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HOW DO WE KNOW IF WE'VE SUCCEEDED?

A practical art-room workshop about transforming everyday materials into something useful, personal, and new.







Before we throw something away, ask: What else could this become?

WHY THIS WORKSHOP?

Art gives us a reason to look again. Materials that might normally be discarded can become the beginning of a new idea. Repurposing encourages students to work creatively with what is already available, solve problems, make thoughtful choices, and understand that design can have both purpose and meaning.

- RETHINK - Look at an ordinary material and imagine another possibility.
- REUSE - Extend the life of materials instead of immediately replacing them.
- REPURPOSE - Give a material a new function, new meaning, or new story.

Creativity + resourcefulness + stewardship

FROM SCRAP TO FUNCTION

A SIMPLE BAG-MAKING PROCESS

Use the workshop video for the full demonstration. This page is designed as a quick reference you can keep and use later.

1. CHOOSE	Select repurposed fabric or another flexible material that can become the body of the bag.
2. FORM	Fold or position the material to establish the front, back, sides, bottom, and opening.
3. SECURE	Join the sides using the demonstrated method. Reinforce areas that need strength.
4. TURN & CHECK	Turn the bag so joined edges are concealed when appropriate. Check that it opens and functions.
5. TRANSFORM	Once the construction works, begin adding surface design and embellishment.

Keep the construction simple so the experimenting, problem-solving, and transformation stay at the center.

MATERIALS TO EXPLORE

Use what you have. Unexpected combinations often create the most interesting results.

- Repurposed fabric, denim, upholstery remnants, felt, or sturdy scraps
- Fabric strips, lace, yarn, trims, ribbon, patches, buttons, beads, and found objects
- Scissors and the construction/adhesive materials demonstrated in the workshop
- Optional: cardboard or other reclaimed material for reinforcement when needed

THE BAG BECOMES A CANVAS

DESIGN • EMBELLISH • REFLECT

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Once the bag functions, the art begins. Arrange materials before attaching them. Think about what you want the viewer to notice first and how the different pieces work together.

- COLOR - What colors work together or create contrast?
- TEXTURE - How can rough, smooth, soft, woven, shiny, or layered surfaces add interest?
- PATTERN - Can repeated shapes, stitches, scraps, or marks create rhythm?
- EMPHASIS - Where is the focal point?
- CRAFTSMANSHIP - Is the finished piece secure, intentional, and functional?



LET THE MATERIAL SHOW ITS HISTORY.

The goal is not to disguise where everything came from. The transformation is part of the story.

THE BIGGER IDEA

A repurposed bag is only one project. The larger lesson is learning to see possibility in what already exists. When students rethink materials, they practice creativity, responsibility, resourcefulness, and problem-solving. Those habits can move beyond the art room and help build a more imaginative and thoughtful future.

Different materials. Different solutions. Thoughtful making.

Thank you to The Education Fund for bringing educators together to share ideas, create, and inspire one another.

CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN

RETHINK • REUSE • REPURPOSE | FUNCTIONAL ART FROM FOUND MATERIALS

Grade Level	Adaptable for Grades 6–8
Length	One 50-minute class period; extend to a second class for more elaborate embellishment
Lesson Focus	Repurposing, functional art, design, craftsmanship, sustainability
Essential Question	How can artists transform discarded or overlooked materials into something useful, beautiful, and meaningful?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will transform repurposed materials into a functional bag or small carrying object.
- Students will apply elements of art and principles of design—especially color, texture, pattern, contrast, and emphasis—to make intentional design choices.
- Students will demonstrate safe and responsible use of classroom tools and materials.
- Students will use art vocabulary to explain their creative decisions and reflect on the value of rethinking, reusing, and repurposing.

CPALMS / FLORIDA VISUAL ARTS BENCHMARKS

- VA.68.O.2.3 — Create a work of personal art using various media to solve an open-ended artistic problem.
- VA.68.S.2.1 — Organize the structural elements of art to achieve artistic goals when producing personal works of art.
- VA.68.S.1.4 — Use accurate art vocabulary to explain the creative and art-making processes.
- VA.68.S.3.3 — Demonstrate understanding of safety protocols for media, tools, processes, and techniques.
- VA.68.C.3.4 — Compare the uses for artwork and utilitarian objects to determine their significance in society.
- VA.68.F.3.4 — Follow directions and complete art tasks in a timely manner to show development of 21st-century skills.

VOCABULARY

Repurpose • Reuse • Functional Art • Appliqué • Texture • Pattern • Contrast • Emphasis • Craftsmanship • Sustainability

MATERIALS & PROCEDURE

A CLASSROOM-READY VERSION OF THE WORKSHOP

MATERIALS

- Repurposed fabric: denim, old clothing, upholstery remnants, felt, canvas, or sturdy fabric scraps
- Fabric scraps and found embellishments: buttons, trims, lace, yarn, patches, beads, ribbons, recycled objects
- Scissors
- Hot glue guns and glue sticks for teacher-approved/age-appropriate use, or another suitable fabric adhesive
- Cardboard or reclaimed material for optional reinforcement
- Pencils or chalk for planning placement
- Optional: handles, straps, pockets, or additional reclaimed materials

TEACHER PREPARATION

- Create a sample bag and prepare one partially constructed example for demonstration.
- Sort reclaimed materials into accessible bins or trays.
- Set up a designated hot-glue station if hot glue is being used.
- Review safe tool use before students begin.
- Display the workshop handout or demonstration video as a visual reference.

PROCEDURE — APPROXIMATELY 50 MINUTES

1. INTRODUCTION / RETHINK — 5 minutes

Show several discarded or leftover materials. Ask: “What else could this become?” Introduce repurposing and functional art. Explain that the goal is to create something useful while allowing the original material to remain part of the design story.

2. DEMONSTRATION — 5 minutes

Demonstrate the simple bag construction: choose the material, fold/form the bag, secure the sides, turn or conceal joined edges when appropriate, and test the function.

3. CONSTRUCT THE BAG — 12 minutes

Students build the basic body of the bag. Encourage simple construction and careful craftsmanship. The bag should function before embellishment begins.

4. REINFORCE & CHECK — 8 minutes

Students strengthen weak areas, check the opening and seams, and add reinforcement where needed.

5. DESIGN & APPLIQUÉ — 15 minutes

Students arrange repurposed embellishments before attaching them. Require at least one intentional appliqué or found-material addition. Encourage color, texture, pattern, contrast, and emphasis.

6. REFINE — 5 minutes

Students trim loose edges, strengthen attachments, check craftsmanship, and make final design choices.

7. CLEANUP & REFLECTION — 5 minutes

Return unused scraps to reuse bins rather than throwing them away. Students complete a brief reflection or share one material they transformed and one design choice they made.

ASSESSMENT & EXTENSIONS

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

SUCCESS CRITERIA / ASSESSMENT

FUNCTION	The bag/object works for its intended purpose.
DESIGN	The student uses color, texture, pattern, contrast, and/or emphasis intentionally.
CRAFTSMANSHIP	Construction is secure, thoughtful, and appropriately finished.
CREATIVITY	The student transforms repurposed materials in an original or personally meaningful way.
PROCESS	The student uses materials safely, follows procedures, and manages time responsibly.
REFLECTION	The student can explain how an existing material was given a new function or meaning.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Before construction: What makes an object functional as well as artistic?
- During design: Which element of art is strongest in your bag—color, texture, shape, or line?
- During embellishment: Where is your focal point? What creates emphasis?
- At the end: What material did you save from being discarded, and how did you change its purpose?

DIFFERENTIATION

- Provide pre-cut fabric rectangles or pre-folded bag forms for students who need construction support.
- Offer a limited material tray to reduce decision overload.
- Allow advanced students to add pockets, handles, closures, layered appliqué, or more complex construction.
- Students may sketch and label their plan before building, or verbally explain their choices during reflection.

EXTENSION / CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTION

Connect the project to environmental science, sustainability, consumer habits, or the life cycle of materials. Students can calculate how many scraps the class diverted from the trash, write an artist statement about transformation, or design a second functional object using only reclaimed materials.

EXIT TICKET

I RETHOUGHT _____. I REPURPOSED IT BY _____. MY STRONGEST DESIGN CHOICE WAS _____.