Zentangle® Lesson Plan
Grades 3-12

Materials: 3.5”x3.5” heavyweight paper or poster board
fine or extra-fine black marker (I use Sakura Micron, size 01)
pencils
large paper or white board for demo
large black marker for demo

Objectives:
1. Student will follow directions and use the steps (dots, string, tangles) to complete a Zentangle tile.
2. Student will use pattern (tangles) to fill in the blank areas of his or her tile created by the string.
3. Student will show evidence of an invented pattern on his or her tile based on an object found in the classroom environment, in a photograph or illustration, or in nature.

Vocabulary:
dot string tangle border
pattern line shape space
repetition shading grid aura
under/overlapping tile ensemble mosaic

Resources:
- Magazines, photographs, Xeroxes and posters that incorporate various patterns
- Examples of completed Zentangles
- Time to look at the Zentangle website: www.zentangle.com (suggested)
- Overhead projector, document camera, or large piece of paper for demo
- Examples of tangles to demonstrate to students (found on the website)
- Soothing music to play in the background

Procedure:
1. Explain to students that they will be making what’s called a Zentangle, which involves a very deliberate way of drawing and thinking.
2. Decide beforehand what 2-4 tangles you would like to demonstrate for students.
   *Demonstrate each of the following steps on a large piece of paper, on a white board, overhead projector, or under a document camera, using a “me, then you” approach.*
3. After students have been given one paper tile, a marker, and a pencil, instruct students to use their pencil to make a dot in each of the four corners of their paper tile. Show them how to “connect the dots” using lines (not necessarily straight) to create a border around their tile.
4. Show students how to create a string – this is a line that will touch the border in a few places. The string should create blank areas, or shapes, that students will be filling in later. Emphasize that the spaces shouldn’t be too small, and the string shouldn’t be too complicated. For younger students, it might be a good idea to show them what NOT to do before having them draw their string.
5. After the dots, border and string are on the tile, students switch to using their black markers. Since many are apt to make mistakes in their drawing, this is a perfect “teaching moment” to show them how to make something out of what they think is a mistake (See the tangle “Bronx Cheer”).

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6. Demonstrate 2-4 tangles step-by-step until you feel students are comfortable with the mark making. I have them do a test tile first following along with the demonstration, and then let students do their own thing on a second tile. Depending on the level of your students, you could demonstrate a tangle that uses overlapping (like Hollibaugh), one that uses a grid (like Eye-Wa), one that uses an aura (like Vermal) and one that is very challenging (like Cadent).

7. Once the 2-4 tangles are completed on the demo tile, show students how to use shading to accentuate the tangles. This is an important step, and really makes the tangles “pop”. When demo tiles are done, students can place them all together on a table in a mosaic arrangement.

8. Provide magazines, pictures, photographs, and other visuals that incorporate pattern for students to use for creating patterns to use in their own Zentangle tile, or send them on a search to find patterns in the classroom environment or (if you’re adventurous) take a field trip outside to hunt for patterns in nature. For older students, demonstrate how to deconstruct a pattern and reconstruct it in its simplest form, using only a few lines or shapes. Students then follow the same steps to create their own Zentangle: dots, border, string, tangles to fill in the spaces, then shading.

**Modifications:** Younger students (K-2) or Special Ed. students can use larger materials if they don’t have a lot of motor control. Black Sharpies (fine) work well for little hands, as do primary pencils. Increase the tile size if necessary. Special Ed. students can also work on pre-strung tiles – the string having been drawn by the teacher before class.

**Assessment:** Create a rubric based on the lesson objectives. The objectives may change with the age of the students or the Zentangle project they are working on. Please keep in mind that the Zentangle process supports creative divergence! Tangles don’t have to be “right” to be beautiful, or to achieve the desired result of focused relaxation. There are endless ways to vary tangles, and endless patterns that can be created. If a student does not form a particular pattern the way it is taught, they can be reassured that their way may be different, but it does not mean that it is wrong. If they make an unintentional mark or sequence of marks, remind them to take responsibility and accept those marks as part of their creative process. What can they do with those marks to respond to them in a positive, creative manner?

**National Visual Arts Standards:**

- **Content Standard 1:** Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
- **Content Standard 2:** Using knowledge of structures and functions
- **Content Standard 3:** Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
- **Content Standard 4:** Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
- **Content Standard 6:** Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines
Books About Zentangle

Books:

**Sandy Steen Bartholomew**  
Yoga for your Brain  
Alphatangle  
Totally Tangled  
Zentangle for Kidz!  
Tangled Fashionista  
Joy of Zentangle (with Suzanne McNeill and Marie Browning)

**Suzanne McNeill**  
Zentangle Basics  
Zentangle 2  
Zentangle 3  
Zentangle 4  
Zentangle 6: Terrific Stencils and Cards  
Zentangle 7: Inspiring Circles, Zendalas and Shapes  
Zentangle 8: Monograms and Alphabets  
Zen Mandalas  
Zentangle Fabric Arts  
Zen-sational Stitches for Quilting

**Cris Letourneau**  
Made in the Shade: A Zentangle Workbook

**Pat Fergusen**  
Zen Quilting Workbook

**Joanne Fink**  
Zenspirations: Letters and Patterning  
Zenspirations Dangle Designs (coming June 2013)

**Marie Browning**  
Time to Tangle with Colors

**Kass Hall**  
Zentangle Untangled: Inspiration and Prompts for Meditative Drawing

**Beckah Krahula**  
One Zentangle a Day: A 6-Week Course in Creative Drawing for Relaxation

Websites and Blogs:

*zentangle.com* - The place that started it all – you can buy products, subscribe to newsletters (to see new tangles!) and read Rick and Maria’s fabulous blog.

*tanglepatterns.com* - Run by CZT Linda Farmer, tanglepatterns.com is a magical place where almost all of the tangles in the universe are gathered together for your enjoyment. You can even buy a PDF download that has them all.

*ztforkidz.com* - Not straying far from the title of this website, Sandy Bartholomew, author extraordinaire, creates a companion site for her book, Zentangle for Kidz. On this blog, she and other contributors share ideas of how to use the Zentangle method with kids of all ages.

*zazzle.com* - retail source for Sandy Steen Bartholomew’s *Alphatangle* and *Zentangle for Kidz* posters (customizable sizes and papers). These are wonderful classroom resources! She also has a great store on Etsy.
iamthedivaczt.blogspot.com - Ahhh, the Diva! She is Laura Harms, a CZT that had the brilliant idea of creating weekly challenges that inspire us all in the world of Zentangle. New challenges are posted on Mondays.

amarylliscreations.com - Geneviève Crabe, another CZT, presents a “Zentangle Roundup” each week on her blog of all the new tangles, articles, tutorials, etc. that are out there. She searches high and low on the web, and puts them all together in one convenient place. Very handy!

createdtodesign.blogspot.com/2012/07/zentangle-in-motion.html - A wonderful stop-motion video (3:04 in length) documenting each stroke of a traditional Zentangle tile from start to finish, including shading...and then in reverse, back to the start again. Created by a graphic design student named Zachary, this delightful video now has a sequel: Zentangle in Motion 2. (3:13 in length) also on the Created to Design blog.

thebrightowl.blogspot.com - Home of the “Zendala Dare” Erin Koetz Olson, CZT presents a weekly challenge string in a mandala format; new dares are posted on Fridays.

Tanglefish.blogspot.com - Amy’s blog! Way better than Denise’s blog, because Amy actually contributes to hers...

tanglebucket.blogspot.com – Sandy Hunter originated the “tangle jar”, where the names of tangles can be drawn from the jar to kick-start a Zentangle tile. She has an extensive list of tangles and a wonderful list on how to create tangleations.

openseedarts.blogspot.com – Carol Ohl creates a LOT of new tangles, so her blog is a great resource for new patterns. She also created the “Tangle-a-Day” calendar, which is a fabulous inspiration for daily Zentangle practice.

artteachertangler.com - Denise’s blog! She has fabulous plans for it, really she does...

flickr.com/groups/zentangle/ - This is the group on Flickr, where MANY people who practice Zentangle post their work. AHH-MAZ-ING eye candy. Beware – you could lose hours here looking at all beautiful Zentangles and ZIAs.
Extensions and Cross-Curricular Activities

1. Create the outline of a letter or an anagram, fill in with a string and tangles.
2. Draw Zentangles on brown craft paper, and add white highlighting.
3. Add color!!
4. Create a Zentangle ensemble or group mosaic. Create a string on a large piece of paper, and then cut it apart (be sure to number them so they can be put back together. See pictures below.)

5. Try drawing Zentangles in the round - using a mandala format, or radial symmetry.
6. Challenge students to create a system for classifying tangles. (Common Core)
7. Tangle BIG! Draw a string with lots of spaces on a large sheet of watercolor paper, and set it up with pens at an art station in your room. When kids are finished with their work, they can fill in a few areas with tangles. Donate the finished piece to the school at the end of the year.
8. Tangle TINY! (On a button, shrink art, pendant...)
9. Create tangle patterns on each flat surface of a paper fan.
10. Tangle on origami, tangrams or pinwheels or on an icosahedron. Create a legend on a spinner, or any other random selection helper. Folded paper makes a great “string”.
11. Tangle on clay – ceramic or polymer, using additive or subtractive methods.
12. Create a Zentangle on metal using a repoussé technique.
13. Try white on black instead of black on white: Use scratchboard as a background instead of drawing paper, or black paper and gel pens.
14. Draw the Zentangle on printmaking foam, and print the flat side in one color, and the Zentangle in another.
15. Use an ATC format (2.5”x3.5”) and encourage students to trade!
16. Find coloring books that would work well with tangles. Use tangles instead of colors in the pictures.
17. Social Studies - Provide students with contour drawings of maps (the U.S., Europe, Africa) and have them draw a tangle in each state or country.
18. Science – Encourage students to use their powers of observation with a microscope or a loupe, and create tangles based on cells and other natural structures.

20. Collect images of patterns in our world that could be made into tangles. Keep a sketchbook, and create step-outs for others to follow.

21. Create ZIA (Zentangle inspired art) from materials you can find in nature, or in your environment.

22. Writing – Students can add Zentangles to their journals, or write step-by-step instructions for other students to follow on how to recreate a tangle that they have invented.

23. Use Zentangle as writing prompts: How does tangling make you feel? Why do you think it makes you feel this way? Does anything else make you feel like that? Where do you like to tangle? Why? Write about your ideal setting to make Zentangles.

24. Write a response to a Zentangle blogger indicating what you like about his or her work, or respond to a comment on his or her blog.

25. Name or rename a tangle with a partner or small group.

26. “Green” tangling - You can tangle on just about anything – sneakers, ceramics, paper sculpture, masks, cloth, wood, gourds, etc. Have students bring in “treasures” from thrift stores that they can tangle.

27. Encourage students to work Zentangle into assignments, such as: a tangled value scale, posters, signs, arrows pointing towards the art room, etc.

28. Combine with bookmaking, making cards, stationary or use scrap paper to make bookmarks.

29. Tangle for a cause – Pinwheels for Peace, Möbius challenge, ATC’s for a children’s hospital or cancer ward, pet adoption agencies.

30. Use Zentangle to decorate seasonal shapes, such as pumpkins, eggs, hearts, and ornaments.

31. Tangle illuminated letters and Celtic knots.

32. Compare and contrast Zentangle designs and patterns with Mehndi and tattoo art.

33. Make paper chains covered with different tangles – have blank strips available for students to use when they are finished early with a project.

34. Decorate a ceramic vessel using Zentangle.

35. Cut paper art – use tangles on a snowflake, Wycinanki, or use them on a backing sheet for other cut paper projects.
Icosahedron Challenge:
Design an icosahedron as a Zentangle tool/sculpture. Draw a different tangle in each triangle (there are a total of 20). Label each tangle, too (if desired). Cut out the template and fold/glue carefully to assemble the geometric form. The “Glue Under” tabs should be hidden inside the form. The finished form can be “rolled” to help you decide which tangles to use in a piece of Zentangle art.

An icosahedron is a regular geometric solid (called a Platonic solid) that has 20 equilateral triangles as faces.

It has 12 vertices (points) and 30 edges (lines between the triangular faces).

(Source: www.enchantedlearning.com)

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Zentangle® Benefits Classrooms under Duress

by Amy Broady, Professional Art Educator & Certified Zentangle Teacher™

(This is the full text that was submitted for the Zentangle article featured in the November 2012 issue of SchoolArts Magazine.)

April 2011 brought a series of violent storms to East Tennessee, where I live and teach art to elementary students. Torrential rains, lightening, hail, and tornadoes plagued the region; students and teachers endured long emergency drills at school, and went home to a night full of chaotic weather that destroyed roofs and windows, flooded roads and homes, and kept families up in the wee hours, crouching in the safest parts of their homes.

During this ordeal, the other art teacher at our school, who teaches in a portable classroom, had to evacuate her classroom and bring classes to my room in the main building. Once the tornado warning was called off, the students were traumatized, exhausted, scared and stressed, as more storms were in the forecast. I had to find a way to manage about fifty third-graders and later, nearly sixty fifth-grade students in an art room that felt crowded with twenty-eight.

Good thing I had my Zentangle training; I knew just what to do. Prep was simple; space was not an issue. The other teacher and I made sure every student had a seat by scavenging folding chairs. If a seat did not have space at a table, a clipboard was the simple solution. I provided poster board tiles, cut into four-and-a-half-inch squares, as well as ebony pencils (no erasers!), and thin-line markers. Thus, materials management was streamlined. As the students arrived, I had gentle music playing. Once everyone had a workspace, I guided the students through a Zentangle experience while my colleague circulated and offered support to the large group.

During those classes, the students were focused and engaged, absorbed in the pattern-building process. Had it not been for Zentangle, those classes would surely have been unproductive chaos. Because of Zentangle, class time was calm, productive, and enjoyable. Half of the students (the ones that were “my” students) had done Zentangle before, the other half had not, as the other art teacher does not teach it. Both classes did great. I wish I had photos, but there was not enough time for that, and the students of course got to take home their work.

I have to admit that guiding the students through the Zentangle process was extremely beneficial for me as well. That night. I was up all night dealing with home and vehicle damage caused by hail and flooding in front of my house. My exhaustion and shakiness the next day faded away as I again turned to Zentangle in my classroom.

Zentangle is a wonderful way to engage students during stressful times.... It is a process that students can later utilize on their own when feeling worried, scared, or just plain bored. Once a knowledgeable instructor has guided them through the process and reinforced their learning, students can expand their experience on their own, thanks to books and online resources.

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