

## Teaching Philosophy

When I think of my work as an educator I am incredibly reflective of the past. My own art education shaped the way that I approach the world as a whole. Like most, navigating the world when you are young is challenging, full of mistakes, and most excitingly a chance for lots of learning. I experienced a lot of anxiety as a child that stemmed from trauma. Art education took me from a child who would not speak to the vibrant outgoing woman I am today. I hope to bring the same light into the lives of my students.

While I look back on my own education fondly there have been moments as an educator where I can now denote my own path and things I would like to shift. As educator and theorist John Dewey states “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow’s” (Ormrod et al. 2020). In an ever changing world our students are the voices of now. Our students should be the navigators of their own ship, we are simply the compass to offer support and guidance. As an educator the most important thing I can do is facilitate my students' self discovery and allow them a space to share their voice!

An educator is a guide. An educator is someone who is incredibly passionate about discovery and the world. I often hear the value of the art educator as a working artist and while for me I feel that deep in my soul to be true, it’s not really just about the art itself. It’s the practice of investigating the world, seeking change, and weaponizing ourselves with as much information as we can to build our toolkit. As an art educator I don’t feel like my role in the classroom is solely to teach students how to learn technical skills, but to trust them to evaluate who they are. Borich described the value to a well maintained classroom environment. The climate of the classroom is one of three pillars to student behavior; alongside institutional roles and personal dispositions. Creating a climate that is supportive of student ideas and interests is a classroom where students learn. (Borich 2009). Structuring the social environment to account for the very differing needs of ALL students is a space that now feels safe to creative freedoms, self discovery, and finding one’s voice and worth!

In artmaking inquiry is everything. Art is our universal language. It is not a product but a process, a practice that can be found in the most mundane of tasks. Guiding students to understand that art can be playful, that it can be powerful, that it can be messy, and most importantly that the end does not negate the means. The more questions we ask the sooner we find a new one that leads us to a new discovery. When we lean towards inquiry based methodology we find ourselves in a position of opening the world up to new minds. Project based learning promotes students to have an understanding of how to use rigorous investigation to answer these inquiries, to look deeper. Described as, “Framing art as research presents a new vision of art practice; making art is understood to be less about producing aesthetic objects and images, and more about exploring a topic or idea, responding intellectually and emotionally to it, and interpreting one's impressions artistically” (Marshall et. al 2011). Inquiry framing asks students to look beyond the grade they want to receive and navigate art making as a deeper understanding and exploration of the outside world. I find artmaking to be such a valuable process and while beautiful results are impactful, some of my most impactful work has been in spaces where I stretched into something new and unfamiliar, the result may not have been aesthetically pleasing but the process shaped a new way of thinking.

The voices of students are so enlightening, even now just a few years apart it amazes me to see all the new perspectives. Every person is a unique mind and by opening up our art studio doors to our students we let in room for a new wave. As educators it is our role to give students the tools to use their own voice. Art Education should be student led. Students should be able to navigate their own experiences. In order to allow room for students to address the questions they want answered, the art class should exist as a studio space. The eight studio habits of mind expand on the ways we can shape our classrooms to reflect this. The practices of developing craft, engaging and persisting, envisioning, expressing, observing, reflecting, stretching and exploring, and understanding the arts world, give us an understanding of processes and language that can center student-led inquiry into a studio practice in the arts class. Studio thinking blends so well into art education as it “provides all students with the opportunity to experience, acquire, practice, and succeed with creative problem-solving skills” (Christopher 2009, pp. 5).

Students having a wide variety of personal experiences brings importance to the design of the classroom. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe are the founders of Understanding by Design; that suggests the value of planning for the all, rather than the standard. UbD suggests four general ideas. First, that topics should be covered in depth rather than swiftly. Followed by the emphasis on sharing goals and assessments prior to learning, to give students the opportunity to understand what they are being evaluated on. They suggest that teachers should work collaboratively to plan for student learning. And lastly that materials should be adjusted to account for student success. When utilizing UbD the goal is to build a classroom that exists for the whole. It excels in this by providing every student the opportunity to meet the goals by outlining them first. Both in creation of lessons and in expressing those lessons in the classroom. Every student deserves equity in the classroom and to have every one of their needs met for their education (Hall et. al 2020, pp. 196).

Being an educator has always been a position of research for me. One of the most valuable ways to conduct this research is to hear the voices of our future. Every year we are adapting to the new wave of minds and all the new information. Every year as an educator is a dedication to lifelong learning, both for self, and for the betterment of all the students we teach.

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