

Teaching Philosophy

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Art, like all other subjects, has the capability to integrate knowledge from other subjects into its own lesson plans to help students develop life skills necessary for college preparedness and the future when students are out in the real world. Some of these skills include higher-order thinking, socialization, and individual growth. The experimental and unrushed nature of art is the most suitable environment for trial and error. When a student advances through various stages of analysis and evaluation before settling on a conclusion, he/she simultaneously develops research, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Many lessons and concepts are learned through reevaluations. In addition to honing crucial skills for the future, students need to learn that mistakes are bound to occur anywhere and anytime. But, it is okay for those mistakes to happen. The important aspect is realizing that how the mistakes are viewed and dealt with heavily influences the future.

Let us face the truth: we all make mistakes. Making mistakes is an unavoidable experience that we all go through in our lives. While we need to accept this truth, we need to also know that we can fix these mistakes by learning from them and not making the same mistakes again and/or moving on to a different point of view to find the correct solution. Similar to how scientists test multiple variables in order to find the solution, artists experiment with various mediums, techniques, and topics that best answer what they are looking for.

Art allows students, from a young age, to experiment with these artistic qualities and simultaneously reflect on their interests of likes and dislikes in art. The forgiving

nature of art where there are multiple solutions provides students the opportunity to practice recognizing problematic areas and seeking the best solution without giving up. Interactions with other students in the classroom through group work and socialization offer students the opportunity to develop their ideas and discover different viewpoints. This learning process, which is only one of many, influences students to seek advice and opinions, and can be applied to all other subjects and outside of school experiences.

Art's capability to integrate abundant knowledge and skill-uses as well as its undemanding atmosphere for quick responses and answers can motivate students to explore and learn about various topics and come up with new ideas and solutions. This interest in learning is a beneficial characteristic that everyone should have, because it encourages self-growth and community improvements. Self-growth is a crucial element in our life experiences. By analyzing our past experiences, we can make improvements on who we are and what we do today. Better learning helps us to become more knowledgeable people, specifically, citizens in our society. We have the skills necessary to make beneficial changes in our communities and build connections with other people, which is crucial to increasing the quality of life experiences. As we grow together in our knowledge, lifestyle and experiences, we are able to invent more advanced technologies and methods that continue to increase our society and culture as a whole.

My experiences from the program *Art Backpacks* have given me more insight on the importance of motivating students to love learning. One of the students, Isaiah, at my table had told me that he disliked school and learning. He would get discouraged easily whenever he worked on the art writing assignments and projects. From my observations and conversations with Isaiah, I felt that he was dissatisfied with his own work and did not

know how to improve it; in the end, he would just give up and mentally walk away from his work. His negligence to try to come up with solutions has stopped the growth of his critical thinking and problem solving skills. Lacking the practice and the use of thinking processes will eventually be detrimental to his individual growth and future life because he would not be able to think of solutions for himself when faced with challenges. Because life is full of challenges, it is our responsibility as art educators to arm students with the necessary skills to handle challenges by not shutting down because of imperfections or mistakes, to find solutions and become successful in their future lives.

But, the question is: How does one encourage motivation? Thinking about Isaiah brings back memories of my own. My motivation during primary and secondary school stemmed from parental approval rather than from learning itself. After realizing that I never was interested in learning, but only in getting “A’s” to get approval, I confronted my parents. They claim that their goal was for me to eventually evaluate my own learning, but first I needed to get high grades in order to become successful in the future. For one thing, I did realize I needed to evaluate my own learning, but that did not happen until I was in college. Second, getting high grades may get a student into a top university or hired for a high-paying job, but without self-evaluation of one’s own learning, he/she will not get very far because they will always stay in the same spot without any improvements. For me, the fear of getting my parents’ disapproval led me to think that mistakes were bad and that the world would turn upside down if my parents found out I failed many of my AP US History pop quizzes. Obviously, I didn’t tell them, but while I knew that I was not great with pop quizzes, I did not think of another way to help with my weakness.

Thus, a solution to increase students' motivation to learn is to have them realize that nothing in life is easy. On the flip side, we can develop skills that will help us go through those hardships much more easily, eventually to a point where things seem easy. However, it must be noted that all new concepts and information is hard to learn at first, and because they're hard, we are bound to make mistakes. The key is to stick to it, altering different methods of learning in order to find one that works by helping us understand and get through those hardships. If we have skills that we have learned in the past and can apply in our current situation, then we may be able to find the path to the answer quicker. However, if we do not have any prior skills or knowledge that could assist with the situation, then we need to start from the beginning. And, this is okay.

Positivity is the characteristic I will teach my future students so that they will develop diligence and perseverance to keep on going without giving up. I believe that art can offer a safe environment where students will not feel judged when they make a mistake because many artistic concepts are subjective. As long as there are valid reasons to support the concept, then it can be deemed as valid. I also believe that the life skills students develop in the art classroom will help them in their other subjects and in the future. As long as students recognize that the skills they learn from art can be applied in math, English, science, etc. and vice versa, then they may be more motivated to learn because they will see a connection between the subjects they are learning in school.

I want my future students to appreciate and find enjoyment in learning. They do not all need to become artists, but at least have the necessary skills to deal with challenges, rather than give up during hard times because they did not know what to do. In addition to the life skills they will learn in the art classroom, students' artistic development and

technical skills will help them to observe their surroundings in detail, assess problems critically, and coming up with better and more efficient solutions. If students were to become interested in art, they will simultaneously develop these life skills while creating artworks. To make art interesting to students, art educators can develop lessons that are interdisciplinary where another subject can play a role as well.

One of the articles from the National Art Education Association mentioned the concept called “Rich Tasks,” which involves relevant and in-depth projects with multiple parts and integration with other core subjects; i.e. learning details of the American Civil War while creating a visual documentary. Researching, keeping a journal, presenting findings and artworks, as well as thinking about how designs impact community are some of the sub-parts that projects can have, which will help students to develop the following skills: critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, social, public speaking, research, evaluation, writing, technical, and debate skills. Through a multitude of unique projects, students will be aware of histories, issues and cultures that exist in the world.

The articles have also made me aware of some of the issues in contemporary art education. The abundant number of topics that art can address clearly shows why students should take art. Because other subjects are focusing on the basics and facts in order to understand more complex information, there is not enough time to teach ways to be aware of self-growth, self-expression and various topics that exist in the world. These are areas that students can learn in the art classroom and are crucial to life knowledge in general.

Everyone is always learning, gaining more knowledge, and new experiences. Even when I become an art teacher, the classroom and students will be my “teachers” by providing me with new views and solutions to problems that will arise when it comes to

projects, students and school issues. My past conversations with family, elders, college professors, and my high school art teacher as well as my interactions with peers, co-workers, and friends have shown me the importance of socialization. Simply listening to others can be a learning experience as their stories, struggles and solutions are revealed. Personally, learning how others' deal with common challenges helps me to approach those same challenges with solutions that can help me conquer them easily. Furthermore, art's open nature with discussions allows people to learn from others' experiences. Thus, in my future art classroom I will advocate that critiques, presentations, debates, and group work occur often. Group setting in the art classroom is perfect for students to gain new insights, opinions, experiences and views on a variety of topics, similar to how I learn from other people's stories and life experiences.

One of the most influential conversations I have had was my interview with my high school art teacher, Ms. Pero. I have learned so much more about what it feels like to be an art educator. Listening to her experiences makes studying art education seem more of a reality. It is not just about textbooks, the theories, essays, or artworks. It is about dealing with other human beings and creating a teacher-student relationship. Ms. Pero's small tips, such as not smiling until January and not putting up with students' nonsense, are given based on her own experiences and will help make the initial process of being a teacher easier for me. Learning can come from all sorts of sources and socialization is just of the major ones.

Everyone falls down in life, but the only way to stand back up and continue moving forward is to recognize the mistakes, evaluate and correct them so that the changes of them happening again decreases. This is true for people of all ages. While behavioral, classroom

environment and school issues may arise during my future career, which I have seen and faced in *Art Backpacks*, continuing to learn, be positive and never give up will help me overcome future challenges. Students need to learn how to do the same thing. They, too, have the capability and confidence to go beyond and overcome hardships. They just need to believe in themselves and never give up. And, unlike other subjects, they can hone in this skill quicker in the art classroom. Art gives students the time and freedom to practice necessary life skills in order to solve problems and become successful in life.