

Teaching Philosophy

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Art is an essential part of a student's educational experience. Art education should aim to broaden students' understandings of the world around them and themselves. All students deserve access to art education and an understanding of their visual culture. Each student has innate creativity that can be fostered through the right classroom environment, instruction, and curriculum. This curriculum should be flexible and adaptive to reflect contemporary practices and student needs. Art education should be student-driven, collaborative, and relevant to our contemporary world.

Art is a main component of the vast visual culture we live in. In order to read this world of imagery on a surface level we must have a basic understanding of symbology and history. Additionally, to participate in a visual culture, one must learn to analyze the images around them with the critical thinking of an artist or historian. Art education can begin the breakdown of art as a visual language for students to understand and activate within themselves. As an art educator, I aim to define the concept of visual culture to students and analyze both everyday visuals and artworks considered important throughout history. Understanding the world around them enables students to become critical about concepts of power, narrative, and intention behind artwork.

The student-centered environment created within a classroom supports relationships among peers and the teacher. As an art educator, I plan to foster respectful and trusting relationships with students in order to promote growth and a motivation to learn. This involves careful listening to students' needs and reciprocating vulnerability and respect. I aim to create an inclusive classroom and manage conflict and behaviors through restorative practices. I will opt

for resolution, learning, and movement forward by offering students choice and voice in their learning path. Through collaboration and open dialogue, students will have opportunities to build a comfortable community within the classroom.

Diversity in art classrooms can be promoted through curriculum, environment, and more. It is essential to consider the history of both the education system and art canon to begin dissecting and combating traditional systems of inequitable access for marginalized groups.

In *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, author bell hooks (2021) states:

Exposing the covert conservative political underpinnings shaping the content of material in the classroom ... opened a space where educators could begin to take seriously what it would look like to teach from a standpoint aimed at liberating the minds of our students rather than indoctrinating them (p. 1)

Creating a supportive environment to discuss difficult topics involves acknowledging one's own biases as an educator. I will strive to confront my own biases and understand how my privileges affect my pedagogical practice. Diversity in the art classroom can also be promoted through consistently discussing contemporary artists from marginalized groups to dismantle the traditional focus on a Eurocentric canon.

A large part of my teaching philosophy focuses on incorporating contemporary practices and contemporary artists into the curriculum. As a teacher I want to learn from others in the field and working artists at the moment. By staying flexible and constantly adapting curriculum to new practices, teaching can stay relevant to the learners. Contemporary artists reflect and respond to current events and the environment we live in and can more readily relate to the student experience. Artists can exemplify and validate student experiences as well as expand

their perspectives. By analyzing and exploring contemporary artists and collaborating within the classroom, students gain empathy and understanding of others' experiences.

In *Brave Art & Teens* Patterson (2014) writes,

By ignoring 'real-life' in the contemporary art classroom, opportunities for growth, empathy and awareness are lost... Without dialogue, reflection, contemplation, sharing, interpreting and revealing what the "art" solicited/s, people do not get the opportunity to learn. (p. 55).

This exemplifies the need to incorporate contemporary art in an open dialogue with student work.

In the classroom, it is important to me to prioritize artistic process and thinking over product-based assignments. The artistic process is unique and must be fostered in young artists as they navigate their own creative inquiries. I would like to develop and present art-making experiences that prioritize process, problem-solving, and creative thinking. By presenting questions and opening dialogue teachers can pose problems students have to find creative answers for. As an educator, it is important to model this learning process by continuing one's own learning and developing their artistic process. In response to the phrase "practice as a way of life" in *Brave Art & Teens* the author writes, "This means integrating life with practice- art with work- and not seeing being a teacher as a 'job' but rather a synthesis with life and living" (Patterson, p. 26). By constantly evolving and adapting my own practice I will better relate and empathize with the ups and downs of the student learning experience. My priorities and ideas of artists' needs of environment, materials, interests will then be integrated into the curriculum more readily.

Overall, my priorities as an educator surround creating a comfortable environment for students to take ownership of their creative process and develop critical and artistic minds. This means staying flexible to student needs, incorporating contemporary philosophies and artists, and scaffolding art-making experiences that allow independence and expression.

Citations

hooks, bell. (2021). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. DEV Publishers & Distributors.

Patterson, J. A. (2014). *Braveart and teens: A Primer for the New High School Art teacher*. High St.