

PLAY, RESEARCH, CHALLENGE, CHANGE

Teaching Philosophy

As an arts educator, I firmly believe in universal access to art. Once discovered, a person's connection to art and art making creates space for play, personal growth, and communication. I start many lessons with **anchored instruction** to unify the students through a shared learning experience, usually including material, word, or physical play. Removing barriers in the classroom early on sets the stage for more open communication, more honest and creative connections, and more fulfilling making. Though I specialize in three-dimensional media as a practicing artist, I include material instruction in a variety of two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and digital mediums and leave room for the students to individualize the expression of their voices. In order to best know a material or a concept, students play with the ideas and the possibilities without pressure of a perfect product.

I encourage students to conduct research – more focused exploration, developing a contextual understanding of the concepts within art and world history. Through **inquiry-based learning** with a heavy emphasis on research, planning, and feedback, I engage my students in critical thinking. We explore the concept, question the context, and concisely edit our visual expression. Through group activities, such as mapping branches and morphing Venn diagrams, art students develop strong skills in synthesis and analysis of research and the communication of ideas. These skills enable us to become questioners and critical consumers. I also continually conduct research into education practices, contemporary artists, and a variety of concepts across subjects to integrate my classroom and engage my students in STEAM learning.

In order to engage in dialogue, we all must develop our voice. I encourage students to be their own advocates in learning. My classroom opens with a discussion of expectations where each student can define and negotiate boundaries of respect. These collective expectations are consistently returned to and adjusted as issues come up in the room. Ensuring the students recognize and exercise their rights in the classroom develops a collaborative environment.

My students are active artist citizens within today's society. Much of my teaching is centered on the **Big Ideas** of community, sustainability, and connections. Real-life applications of artistic expressions and solutions are modeled in my classroom through the introduction of contemporary artists who show how art can live and make change outside of expected settings and traditional mediums. As educator Jack Watson notes in his article on contemporary art practice in the high school classroom, "Strategies for artmaking that are active and socially engaged enable students to make use of the methods of communication that they already possess but feel disempowered to use" (Watson 34). In my classroom, we develop a culture in which we look into the causes of issues, evaluate our own perspectives, respect each other's contributions, work to communicate, and act.