Teaching Philosophy

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The love of creating and sharing the creating process with others is why I teach. To do this well, I focus on three main things in my art classroom: I build a safe community, I foster good communication with all students, and I seek out growth. The art studio community is a place of encouragement, to boost each other up with motivating words and broaden our own understanding of our work through other's curious comments. For students who think they are not artists, multi language learners, and students with special needs, I demystify art jargon and create bridges into other studies to help students get a foothold in the studio. The ultimate goal in my class is growth; yes in art skills, but also in the invisible skills that they take into life, like perseverance, finding multiple correct answers and being playful or experimenting. As I continue on my path of teaching, I will continue to evolve and grow myself. The teaching studio is a favorite place because it's a place where I can foster a safe environment, connect with students in a variety of ways, and see the growth of each individual.

All humans need to be seen, know they are valued and included. I work to create a safe environment in order for students to be able to learn skills and then express themselves and their story. I make sure that I am a good example of giving encouraging words, and remind everyone that this is the expectation on how they should speak to each other. During critique we make observations about art elements like line, shape, value and form. This provides an opportunity for the artist to see their painting through another person's eyes rather than focusing on "what can be improved." We then take the skills we've learned to work on projects with open ended prompts. Each student brings their own experiences, culture and traditions into the classroom, and these differences are celebrated and encouraged. I can foster this safe sharing by first by being vulnerable and sharing about my culture and second, sharing artists from many different cultures and backgrounds. This safe environment gives space for students to experiment, tell their story, fail, try again, take time for self reflection, and to start again.

Many students come into my class thinking that they are not artists and perhaps they can't be good artists because it's not their strength. I've taken inspiration from the math and science classes to talk about creating art using "math language" or "science language" that students might be more

comfortable with. I've turned to math to help me communicate about sighting (a practice of holding out a pencil and visually measuring the angle or proportion). As an example, when creating a picture of a human, instead of "draw the direction" in which the arm is lifted, we think of that lifted arm "as an angle." We use sighting to find the angle in which the arm is lifted and decide what angle that would be if we measured it with a protractor. Then we draw that angle on our paper. Another example is to take vocabulary from the scientific method so that a color theory lecture becomes an experiment. Instead of "red and blue makes purple," we take different reds and blues and make a prediction on what the colors will make when mixed together. We then mix the colors, observe the results, and then proceed to another combination. When we connect different school subjects, comprehension can grow in both art making and the other subject. In addition to connecting our learning to other subjects, I give students multiple ways of accessing the information through hand outs, demonstrations, links to videos and writing vocab on the board. These different ways of communicating and connecting with prior knowledge reach and engage students with different strengths.

Whatever skills students enter my classroom with is their starting place for growth. These skills are their traditional art skills, but also their intangible life skills that are practiced within the art classroom. Within each project, there are skills that will be practiced, but students are not expected to make the same exact thing. Insead of everyone painting daffodils, I may ask them to paint a still life inspired by springtime, using gradations. These projects include skill building and are goal oriented with multiple ways of achieving the finished project. While students work, I make rounds checking in with each student which gives me the opportunity to see their growth and to assist when a student is hesitant about a new medium, or a different way of approaching a project. During my one on one check ins, I focus on our intangible skills of persevering, observing what happens, assessing what we've done, and trying again when we don't like the outcome. When we come up to challenges in making art, we encounter an opportunity to practice these skills. It is expected that our first sketch won't work. Every attempt at art making won't turn out as we envisioned. However, if we relax into this unknown experiment, everyone has a chance to explore and to try something new that can be a really rewarding experience. I don't want to be the only one observing this growth. Using self assessments like reflection journal entries and self made rubrics, students assess their work which informs and guides my assessment of their final project. Creating artwork is what defines an art studio, but watching

students grow their persistence and willingness to learn from their failures and accomplishments is a huge life skill that I prioritize.

Using Universal Design for Learning, I have grown in my understanding of how to include prior knowledge, culture, personal interests and social emotional learning into my lessons and project prompts. To continue to grow this and provide deep meaningful prompts for my students to explore, I will glean ideas from other educators, collaborate with my colleagues and use Understanding by Design to align my goals with a big idea, create essential questions and think about enduring understanding in assessments for the students to dive deeply into their learning. As I teach, I practice self reflection through taking notes about what went well and what I would do differently and am open to criticism about my teaching.

A recurring compliment I receive is that I am a very encouraging teacher. This permeates the three areas of how my art classroom works. My art studio is a safe space so everyone can get to work and start making. The students can be sure that I will find a way to communicate to them in their language, so they too can create. Focusing on the goal of the project, I can witness how each student tackles this goal in their individual way, guiding and cheering them along, and then helping them reflect on their work. It is also a place where each of us are practicing life skills like creative problem solving, trying and trying again, and learning from experimentation. Holding the safe space, working with students, showing them how they are growing, and encouraging them along their path is why I continue coming back to the classroom.