

My Teaching Philosophy in Art Education

Art is a language, a medium to transcend barriers and open doors. I choose to teach Visual Arts in Baltimore City Public Schools because the students need and deserve to use the language of art to understand themselves and their community, to cope and effect change in their world, and to find personal and collective freedom and joy.

My philosophy of art education is rooted in Humanism's main themes: personal autonomy, human relationships, diversity in thinking, commitment to causes, vocational training, direct-experience and community involvement (Broudy, 1973). One of my teaching inspirations, Paulo Freire, championed autonomy development as embedded in social change processes (Veugelers, 2017). For art education, this means creating work through identity development in a dialogical way within the context of real life experience and our art's impact on society. I choose to focus on a curriculum that teaches students to reflect on their own experience and to take on real problems that affect them individually and their Baltimore community, such as protection of their rights, gun violence, homelessness, addiction, etc. Framing art curriculum in this way is a powerful practice of social, racial, and economic justice. Coupled with the emphasis on student-centered choice surrounding these topics and mediums, students are empowered to utilize art as a practice of resistance.

Additionally, I rely upon small group discussion, working art journals for ideation, and referencing examples of contemporary and historical visual artists, local and international, to ignite the students' critical consciousness, to become more self-aware, and to overcome oppression through the liberatory practice of art-making. As a white woman teaching in Baltimore City, I understand the need and urgency to support students in their exploration of their own experience, to have tough conversations, and to not shy away from challenging institutional and personal biases. Being a teacher is a privilege and thus it also charges me with a responsibility to constantly examine my teaching practice and blind spots. My restorative approach to art education demands a safe and inclusive classroom, rooted in multiculturalism and diversity, which I begin working with my students to build on day one. By doing so, my students feel equally invested, enough to take responsibility and ownership of their own education. I believe that art is for all students regardless of ability; every student has a unique gift to share with the world, and my job is help them discover and refine this gift. Through these approaches, my students will graduate with the skills they need as creatives and artists, including the knowledge of how to think critically and effect change while celebrating their strengths and differences.

Finally, my philosophy of art education includes fostering the sense of joy that arises through learning and practicing art. I feel that my passion and love of the teaching profession and of making artwork will propel my students to engage deeply, and inspire them to create meaningful and personally fulfilling artwork that they enjoy making. Alber Einstein is quoted, "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge." As an art teacher, this is my task, my philosophy, my joy!

References

Broudy, H. (1973). Humanism in Education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 7(2), 67-77. doi:10.2307/3331945.

Veugelers, Wiel (2017). The moral in Paulo Freire's educational work: What moral education can learn from Paulo Freire, *Journal of Moral Education*, 46:4, 412-421, DOI: [10.1080/03057240.2017.1363599](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2017.1363599)