

Philosophy of Teaching

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I believe that a classroom is similar to a business in that both workers and students require a degree of flexibility, encouragement and diversity to thrive. In the creative professional environment, I have experienced that without the development of skills, workers often feel unchallenged and that their work has become repetitive. One aspect of maintaining a successful work environment is the importance of a good level of morale. When new skills and challenges are introduced, they are often followed by an increase in ideas, enthusiasm and productivity. I believe this same concept can be applied to the classroom: when engaged with new ideas and challenges, the learning experience is likely to be a rewarding one. It can be especially motivating if students are given the encouragement to explore and apply knowledge taught in class to their own interests and ambitions. One way to capture students' interest would be to include brainstorming activities at the start of every project, and student work critiquing forums at the end, as well as incorporating regular one-to-one review meetings to understand each student's individual learning style and motivations. Ensuring that each student receives constant and clear feedback from fellow students and myself will be an essential factor in encouraging the class to learn from each other. Instituting regular feedback sessions will allow students to develop the ability to accept praise and receive criticism in a constructive way.

In choosing a career teaching the visual arts, I anticipate the daily challenge of encouraging the growth of creativity, knowledge and ideas in people of various backgrounds and interests. This will involve being well researched and prepared for each lesson. I believe it is important to take into account the motivations and abilities of every student (how they learn, what skills they currently possess and ambitions they may have) and build upon them by establishing appropriate goals and expectations. I expect this process will involve a great deal of Reflective Learning/Teaching to evaluate what learning methods are most effective and what can be improved. Working with each student to help he/she understand what skill sets he/she has, what he/she wants to achieve and how to achieve it, through methods which can be as simple as sharing the assessment criteria with students so that they know what to do to achieve top marks. A key focus would be how a student can achieve his/her personal aspirations by utilizing practical skills enhanced by creative and conceptual thinking methods taught in class.

I expect finding ways to engage students to be a daily challenge, especially students who aren't interested in pursuing careers related to the visual arts. My focus will be to find a connection that can contribute to a student's desired development. For instance, a student with an ambition to be a surgeon could be introduced to Gunther von Hagen's scientific and artistic exploration of the human body in his 'Body Worlds' exhibitions. The development of precise wrist movement from drawing, painting and sculpting might also be a beneficial to such a student interested in pursuing a medical career. An aspiring engineer could investigate the Bauhaus school of art and architecture that operated in Germany from 1919-1933 for its innovative methods in design, form and functionality. A degree of self-expression, and creative interpretation of new challenges will be an asset in most careers a student might wish to aspire to. Ideally I would want to communicate individually with each student and then help students research several options that could contribute towards their personal goals. Understanding what skills are transferable to the workplace, or to other subjects will be important to ensure that students (who perhaps feel disaffected by the Arts) do not feel excluded or left behind. Which, if unaddressed could effect the morale and productivity of the whole class.

A class of students will vary in learning abilities and preferences. When lectures are necessary or appropriate I feel it is important to combine a range of methods and resources to ensure that the information is palatable to all students and that learning opportunities are maximized. I believe talking *with* students, rather than at them, is more conducive to learning. Where possible I plan to turn lectures into more of a workshop or discussion complete with teamwork activities. When a large body of textual information is required, I will use handouts, overhead projections, PowerPoint presentations and demonstrations to make the experience less static. Exposing students to professional environments might also be a source of inspiration. This can involve inviting professionals and guest speakers to give presentations, as well as incorporating lessons that include students preparing and pursuing relevant internships and day placements to encourage independence. If I feel the class would benefit from a particular experience out of the school environment, class trips might also be an option. I would like to incorporate a website with QuickTime movies and step-by-step PDFs that support computer-based classroom lessons such as website design or Flash animation. Class lectures, notes and resources will also be available via the website. To ensure that arts are accessible and affordable to all students, I also intend to encourage the use of natural resources wherever possible such as 'home-made' paper and paints etc. I feel that a natural approach will also encourage a sense of independence and resourcefulness amongst students.

A personal goal of mine is to spark curiosity and thirst for learning, and to motivate students to expand on classroom instruction and learn by themselves. I believe this will involve engaging students with methods that they find interesting and accessible, whilst nurturing a classroom culture in which students take pride in their work and develop projects beyond what is required. To support my commitment to students, I plan on extending the learning environment beyond the classroom by being available to provide additional feedback via email and by incorporating parent participation. Other aspects of support might include tutoring after school hours to engage and support students who are perhaps falling behind or to encourage more enthusiastic students.

Establishing a positive rapport with students will be a priority. I believe this can be achieved by creating a supportive environment where pupils feel comfortable to share ideas and opinions on their work without the fear of being told that they are wrong. I intend to nurture this confidence through peer assessment where students will have the opportunity to analyse their own and others' work objectively and to gain confidence from each other, but most importantly to encourage the students to take responsibility for their own learning. I have a creative and vibrant personality which I plan to include in my teaching as well as incorporating a strong sense of when a group needs leading, and when I can or should step back in order for pupils to take ideas and discussions in new exploratory directions which aid their learning.

I embrace teaching as one of the most challenging and inspiring environments I could ever work in. Ultimately, it is an opportunity to develop personal and professional skills and to broaden my perspective through the exchange of ideas with individuals from different backgrounds. I intend to nurture a mutually beneficial learning environment with an enthusiastic and dynamic approach to education. My ambition is to motivate students to seek opportunities that enrich their lives and the community they belong to.