Teaching Philosophy

At the core of my teaching is a deep belief in the unique ability of each and every child. This is not a conclusion to which I have arrived through my own education or research; it is a deep and abiding respect for children and learning which led me to want to be a teacher.

Above my desk I have this quote by a teacher of teachers, Doris Lessing: “Education means only this: that the lively, alert, fearless curiosity of children must be fed, must be kept alive.” I believe the desire to learn is a wonderous, amazing, innate human trait, and it is a great responsibility to nurture and expand upon that essential quality in students. I believe that the role of a teacher ought to be to lead children on an adventure of discovery. I try to make my teaching about helping students to discover their passions and interests, to get a glimpse into who they are, what they can do. The root of the word “education” is the Latin word, “educare” which means “to lead out” or “to draw out.” That is what I feel is my role as a teacher, to draw out of students their own abilities and curiosity, to impart to students the habits of work, creative play, and discipline that will allow them to be discoverers on their own, capable of expressing and utilizing what they learn.

My role as a teacher is to have the big picture as to where I want my students to be when they leave my class, the big picture regarding what I think would be beneficial for them to experience. I present problems to my students, the solutions to which lead, in increments, to the development of skills, and, ideally, to an experience of a personal voice and vision. A problem I may present may be: “How do you create depth in a drawing?” Or, “How do you express sadness and loss symbolically in a work of visual art?” I am an art teacher because I truly love to see the solutions my students create to address these “challenges.”
I love teaching art for many reasons. It is with delight and awe that I experience the infinite forms of human expression, from that of famous artists and scientists to my own students. I love to show my students great, creative art, from the past as well as art that is being made in the present, and to see them moved and inspired, and sometimes even angered by what they see. I think it is important to stir their beliefs and their passions. As important as what is made in art is the process of the creating, the exploration, development, and refinement of ideas, and I love to see my students experiencing and understanding that process. This process is so critical that I do some projects in which the experience of the creating and making is the goal, not the product. The classroom art studio is a place for learning to take risks, a place for learning from failure--or learning that failure is simply an opportunity to learn. Creating art also calls students to clarify their beliefs, and to learn to become articulate in their verbal expression.

I have always had the feeling of the importance of art and the process of creating. Research I have done into learning and the brain has confirmed this feeling. A part of my job as an art teacher is to educate the public, and even other educators, about the importance of the arts not only in learning, but in the lives of all of us. I try to get the word out that it is not true that you are either born to be creative, an artist, or you are not, but that being creative is an inherent human trait which can be developed, like building muscles, and the result of this development is hopefully a more beautiful and humane world.

I seek to remind people that our students are not vessels to be filled with information and taught to perform, but that our children are unique souls who require nurturing and encouragement in order to become their powerful, creative selves.

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