

Teacher's Statement

by Catherine Byrne

My mission is to guide children as they learn the language of visual art in both viewing and creating, and to empower them as they explore different materials and techniques while learning important visual art concepts. My goal is that through guided practice they will use this knowledge to effectively express their own points of view, develop confidence in their own abilities, and experience the joy that comes from that.

My lessons are designed to be developmentally appropriate, broken down into manageable steps, accessible to all, and to spark interest and curiosity. To minimize the occasional frustration that comes from doing something challenging, I teach that there are multiple solutions to one artistic problem, and that they can better learn from their own art goals instead of comparing themselves to others. Keeping them focused more on the process than the product alleviates unnecessary pressure while still supporting deep learning and improvement. I seek to get to know each student and meet them where they are individually in their learning, and to encourage them to experiment, move ahead thoughtfully, and make important discoveries each in his or her unique way.

I show them diverse artists while using visual thinking strategies to prompt them to wonder about and learn from the decisions the artists made. I may incorporate subjects such as history, music, language or science to give the lessons context by imagining a place in time, and to get them in the habit of asking "Why?" and "How?" By imagining and then relating this back to themselves, students will realize these were people just like us who were making something as a response to what was happening around them. We will then further examine *how* the artist made what they made. In this way I mean to give the related art projects relevance and meaning.

For younger grades I create fun and stimulating lessons that tap into their life experiences and imagination while teaching foundational concepts such as shape, space, composition, line, and color theory. We explore and sometimes combine different tactile materials so students gain agility in handling the tools and mediums and learn the particular behaviors and properties of the materials.

I create a supportive and positive learning environment, where students can concentrate but also have healthy, relaxed, respectful and constructive critiques and discussions on the work they are doing. Students learn to develop practices that honor the materials and workspace that make art-making possible, and that cleaning up and taking care of your room and materials are an essential part of the process of making art. All of my classes incorporate developmentally appropriate student accountability and respect for our peers and for the supplies we all share.

My intention is that by learning to express themselves through art in my classroom, all of my students will develop patience, problem-solving skills, kindness and collaboration, therapeutic benefits, confidence, skill, and hopefully lifelong art practices- but most importantly, a deep respect for visual art that they can carry into whatever path they choose in life.