

Teaching Philosophy

Tessa Sutton

My student-centered classroom focuses on creative problem solving and visual literacy through hands-on discovery of material and conceptual processes, art history and aesthetic inquiry. I emphasize open-ended material and thematic explorations to serve creative expression and personal voice while providing students a positive, safe space to create and reflect. Drawing from Olivia Gude's and Jerome Bruner's "spiral curriculum" models, I use themes or "big ideas" such as identity, transformation, imagination and play, repeating over a students' educational career. Students are interested in social, environmental and political issues, as well as existential questions, and I use these to tailor lesson plans through surveys. Offering students choice to work from their interests is key to motivation and classroom management.

Through multiple teaching strategies such as discussion of slides, demonstrations, practice and self-assessment, I differentiate lessons for ELL, special needs and students with diverse learning styles. Scaffolding instruction aids students who may need more time to digest and apply information. I use formative assessments such as gallery walks and reflective writing to provide student feedback in progression. Keeping activities challenging yet achievable in the "zone of proximal development" is where I aim my art lessons in order to keep expectations high, while encouraging success for everyone.

As a working artist, my strength lies in being able to make interdisciplinary connections using multicultural perspectives. Key to making this viable is bringing in artists' strategies and research methods into an inquiry-based setting. My room is a studio environment where students apply non-linear stages of the creative process and the Eight Studio Habits of Mind, such as engaging and persisting, stretching and exploring, reflecting, expressing and envisioning.