

Teaching Philosophy

What does it mean to be free? Free to question, free to explore, free to imagine, free to create... What would it take for all students to feel free? I think it starts with being in community with our students. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. imagined a “beloved community”, conceptualizing a world where people would bond on the basis of shared humanness. By bonding with our students, walls of resistance start to fall, and doors of opportunity begin to open. Through art engagement, those developed bonds work to create **meaningful experiences**. In these meaningful experiences, art can serve as our most powerful tool to communicate with one another, raise awareness about issues, and progress society.

I have always had a natural inclination towards visual arts, as a shy child it helped me better express myself and, in many instances, feel free. I grew up heavily involved in the arts, with parents who not only encouraged my involvement but prompted it. I had a lot of access and resources to various artistic outlets from a young age that gave me avenues to utilize my creativity for self-exploration and worldly understanding. Granted, as an African American woman, I realize that my experience differs from many other students of color who are not afforded the same opportunities to explore creative outlets or understand that their artistic pursuits can be substantial ways of contributing to society and improving their livelihoods. Being able to facilitate that understanding, to facilitate that freedom, is an essential contribution I want to make to art education. I want students to feel seen, heard, and free. I want to create freeing, enjoyable learning spaces that relate to my students’ interests and experiences. I believe the art classroom can serve as an access point to creating these learning spaces when seen and utilized as a “beloved community”. The key components I would integrate to achieve a “**beloved community**” in my art classroom are collaboration, validation, and multiculturalism.

From Michelangelo and the David sculpture, to Frida Kahlo and her portraiture paintings, much of the art students learn about is commended for the work of one talented person. This focus on self-expression is both necessary and admirable, but art can also be influential from a collaborative standpoint. Through collaboration, students work together to understand different perspectives and combine everyone’s ideas to generate ingenious solutions. To collaborate effectively, there must be a focus on relationship building. In my classroom, I will open the floor for conversation to facilitate the process of getting to know each other. Relationships must then develop beyond the classroom into the wider community. Through community partnerships, a network of teachers, students, and other community members will collaborate during all phases of an art project and ultimately grow closer in community. I think a key part of **collaborative learning** is celebrating the creative process, as it reinforced the idea of community building. Ensuring students feel validated throughout all processes in my classroom requires an incorporation of students’ various lived experiences, as that recognizes and celebrates their identities and cultures. A curriculum that nurtures their individuality, brilliance and unique assets can equip students with tools to transform themselves and society. Through the use of story-telling and empathetic listening I can help students feel heard in my classroom. Having representation of varying and diverse artists, artwork, and art methods can help students feel seen in the work. The implementation of their experiences and knowledge as co-teachers can help them feel valued, as it provides students with agency and a sense of ownership in the class content.

Centering **multicultural** education lends itself well to the multitude of identities and experiences students bring with them into the classroom, providing representation for all students. It decenters whiteness from the core of curriculum content and prepares students from all backgrounds to be better community members and understand how multicultural issues shape the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of society. To facilitate student understanding of multiculturalism, I believe it is essential to have them think critically about the world and about art by engaging in deep-dive discussions and investigations of dominant narratives. As an educator, I can help my students deconstruct dominant narratives of White- European experiences in art. Through our collective deconstruction of ideas, we can then use counter-narratives to center non-White artists and art practices. An emphasis on self-reflection is also crucial to interrogate my own thoughts, biases, and positions with my students, and thus for all of us to come to a more well-rounded understanding of ourselves and the surrounding world. Actively implementing **community engagement** projects into a multicultural art curriculum is essential for authentically incorporating and connecting with diverse cultures.

In order to be in “beloved community” with a school, or any learning environment, I think there must be collective acceptance and understanding of the unique and diverse cultural strengths that each community member brings with them. By supporting one another in “beloved community”, my students and I will grow closer in understanding and connectivity, considering each other’s’ needs, and making a collective effort to create and reimagine learning spaces. In our reimagined learning spaces, we will be free to share ideas collaboratively, free to simultaneously teach and learn, free to construct dialogues and free to create art that can improve the world around us.