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The Arts in STEM: Advancing Meaningful Instruction
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My Autobiography

Art has always been a passion of mine. I loved art class since kindergarten. I remember having the most amazing art teacher Mrs. Oates. She was such a fantastic and loving teacher. She was so open and honest with the students, she had awesome projects for us to complete, and she taught us techniques and skills that we can use forever. I remember many of the projects that I completed with her. We wove prayer mats taking inspiration from Moroccan culture. We made art work using a sheet of aluminum. We designed our dream home and dream area to live in. We made dot portraits (drawing something using only dots). We made the flags of our country. We also decorated the displays with our artwork. I remember helping my teachers complete bulletin board displays. We would always change the bulletins with new work and celebrate different holidays including Christmas, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, and showing school spirit. I remember my middle school having a die cutting machine in one of the teacher's room and I was obsessed with it. I loved going in there and cutting out letters and shapes for my projects. I also remember creating paintings and portraits.

This was such a fun time in my life. These experiences stand out to me because I really enjoyed what I was doing. My teacher was mindful of what we liked and incorporated that into the work we were doing. Something I

really appreciated was that my teacher was conscious of the culture of students and incorporated that into the curriculum. This made me feel like my culture is important and it was a great opportunity to teach others about prayer mats. Everyone's mats came out so beautiful and it was great to see them next to each other displayed and we were able to learn a new technique of weaving. Now as an adult I love crafting and making things. I recently bought a Cricut machine which is a cutting machine. This has been a game changer for me. I am able to create personalized items using vinyl. I can create banners and wood signs. I also love to "glam plan" this is using stickers for my planner. These stickers help me plan out my weeks and it looks beautiful. My love for art has shown in my classroom. My classroom is fully decorated with beautiful work from the students. I have lights, inspirational quotes, anchor charts, 3D models, and posters all over my walls. My goal is to create an environment that is inviting and happy for my students. During February I hung up flowers from the ceiling and my students were so amazed by the display, they were so happy to come to class and look at them. When I teach plate tectonics I have students create 3D models using balloons. I hung up all of the models from the ceiling and it created such an awesome effect. Students were so happy to see their work and were proud of how it was displayed.

The general characteristics of art experiences that have been meaningful for me have included connecting the art projects to me personally. They also have included teaching me new techniques. Also

having fun was an important factor in all of the projects. These three things alone made the biggest impact on me. I loved having an art class that was culturally responsive, helped me develop new skills, and overall a fun time to discover, learn, and have fun with my friends. Art class was a time where we all were together and able to express ourselves. I feel like I have been successful in art and wish that I had art classes in high school. My art classes ended in eighth grade so not having that opportunity in high school was really disappointing for me.

One thing that was a turn off for me was noticing how little my art teacher had in terms of resources. I feel like even when I was a student I could tell how little attention was given to art classes (including music). Art helped me a lot when I was growing up. I was able to be artistically creative in all of my projects. I hope that districts realize how important art classes are and give teachers a fair share for resources so that they can develop lessons that are meaningful to their students.

My definition of art is being able to express yourself in a creative way. This can include any medium such as paint, paper, sculpture, digitally, or musically. My past learning experiences shaped my definition of art because I was exposed to so many different types of art and that has helped me see art in everything. I love giving my students opportunities to do some type of art work with each project. I see how creative they are, and I love to encourage that creativity. Art is an important part of STEAM for me. I believe that including it with science, technology, engineering, and math helps

enhance learning for those subjects. Art is like the cherry on top of an ice cream sundae. It brings everything together and makes it complete.