Art Autobiography

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1/26/22

Recall

Projects in school always involved art. A lot of our projects were structured, prepared, and we all did the same thing. Even in art class we all had the same directions to follow and our products came out similar to everyone else's. That was when we had an art class. I grew up when they were cutting educational funds and art seemed like an ok item to cut. I wasn't very skilled at art but I did love to draw and doodle in my notebooks.

I remember feeling like I did not have a lot of artistic talent. The first time I felt successful in art was in high school. I was in the art club after school. Just like in other subjects, I liked Art because I liked the teacher. Mrs.RL always took time to connect with us and in her class it wasn't about doing the same thing step by step as everyone else. In her class we learned about art history but were able to design plans for our own projects and then bring those designs to life with paint, clay and paper. Our final project was a two foot piece. This was a clay sculpture that had to be at least two feet tall and stand independently. I made a mixed sculpture with a pinch pot, a coil pot and slab all combined and then fired together. I was so proud of my creation even though it didn't have any real functionality. The items I made that were functional such as knick-knacks and coffee mugs were items that meant a lot as well because they were always made

with someone in mind. I would use glazes with their favorite colors in them or add details that would be meaningful to the user.

As I went on to college I took a class about film and had absolutely no interest in it. I took another class much later in my college career that was a dance class. I love dance. When I was young I spent several years studying and enjoying line dancing at a local country line dance club. This was an artistic form that resonated with me from the age of 12 to now. I love the moves, I love knowing them well enough to make them my own and I love the way that dance connects you with the music.

Reflect

As a teacher I use art in most subjects. In reading we depend heavily on illustrations at the first and second grade levels. This helps our students to use context to better understand not only how to read words but how to connect meaning with them. We use art in writing to do the same for our readers. We often label our pictures to help our reader recognize the items and their importance to our stories. In math we use Art to take a difficult abstract concept and make it tangible and approachable. Art is also a way to help students know that we never start as experts. Art is no different than other subjects. The more you practice the more skilled you become. I start every year by giving my students a container of play-doh so they have something here at school that they know they can be successful with.

I am careful when we start the art portion of a project that students have choice in medium as well as design. It may be cute to see all of the heart shaped animal creations that are carbon copies of each other in the hall but students gain a new level of depth in learning when they are invested in the item that will represent their learning. Giving a wide variety of choice in the type of project also is a great differentiation tool. If a student is in a place where they cannot handle a huge amount of work or they don't have a lot of confidence as an artist they may choose to trace and color whereas another may take on paper mache and paint. Both the tracing student and the paper mache student will end up with a product they put effort and emotion into and they both will feel proud presenting it.

Connect

To me art is expression. It is taking information and expressing it through creation. We encourage students to work so hard creating writing and expressing information in a prescribed way but I feel given some freedom and choice they will be better equipped to express more and with more confidence. I have seen how choice and freedom has caused students to be more engaged and invested in their learning and for me there is no going back.