

Art Autobiography

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The Arts in STEM – Advancing Meaningful Integration

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My earliest memories of creating and experiencing art are from elementary school. I have a very distinct memory of a Father’s Day project that meant a lot to me. My kindergarten teacher brought in wood clipboards for us to decorate for Father’s Day. I remember feeling so excited when my teacher got out the paint and markers and told us to have fun, be creative and decorate the clipboard in any way we wanted. I decided to trace the wood grain with a black marker and paint different colors in between the lines. I loved how it came out and I could not wait to bring it home to give to my dad. On the day we were supposed to bring our projects home, my teacher could not find mine on the drying rack. I remember feeling so disappointed and heartbroken. I put so much thought and time into making my design and it was lost. I think what that experience taught me as a young child is that when you create something beautiful you want to share it with someone you love. I learned that seeing other people appreciate your work gives you a sense of pride and makes you feel good about yourself.

As far back as I can remember, I have always enjoyed being creative and making things with my hands. I find it relaxing and fulfilling to work on a creative project, especially if I am making it for someone I care about. As a young student in elementary school, going to the Art

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classroom was always something I looked forward to each week. I thought it was so fun to draw and paint in the middle of the school day. It never felt like “school” to me. My artwork was often chosen to be displayed in the public library or in the school art show, which made me feel confident and proud. I continued to enjoy art class in Middle School and in High School but found it difficult to fit it into my busy schedule. As an adult, I continue to enjoy learning about art, viewing art in galleries and online, and I enjoy learning new creative skills and techniques. I spend a lot of time discovering and learning interesting and creative things on YouTube and Pinterest. Recently I picked up embroidery and cross stitch as a creative hobby that helps me relax after a long day of teaching. I needed a screen free hobby to give my eyes and brain a break at the end of the day.

I also feel very fortunate to live so close to New York City and Philadelphia. The buildings in the cities themselves are works of art. I really enjoy going to art galleries where I can view and enjoy amazing work from artists from all over the world. Some of my favorite New York City galleries to visit include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Guggenheim. The Philadelphia Museum of Art is another favorite. I could spend hours walking around viewing the variety of artwork and sculptures on display, learning about history, and getting inspired to create my own artwork. It has been a long time since I have had the chance to explore art galleries, since I now have two small children. I am hoping to go more often as they get older and can share in the experience.

When it came time in High School to pick a college and a college major, I wanted to do something that incorporated my interest in art and my passion for mathematics and science, so I chose to major in Architectural Engineering. After two years of taking Engineering classes I ultimately decided to switch my college major to Technology Education. Being a Technology

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Teacher is perfect for me because I get to be creative with my lessons. My classes are primarily project based so I get to spend a lot of time helping my students learn how to use Graphic Design software where they can express themselves by creating digital art. I enjoy seeing my students think creatively and critically to solve problems from each of their own unique perspectives. My students tell me they enjoy my class because of the freedom. I used to think that meant I was an “easy” teacher, but I think what they really mean is that they enjoy having the freedom to be creative. This is what I enjoyed so much about art class when I was younger. I appreciated the ability to feel comfortable being creative and not being afraid to make a mistake. After all, there are no wrong answers when you are being creative.

As an educator, I like to incorporate art into my lessons as much as I can. Allowing my students to express their ideas in creative ways helps me understand them better as people. I find I connect better with my students on a personal level once I see their design work. For example, I had a student who has an interest in horror movies. I had no idea this was something she was interested in until I allowed my students to design a menu based on a movie of their choice. Her menu was great; she chose fonts that looked like blood and the items on her menu were based on the names of characters from her favorite horror movies. Before we did this project, this particular student was very quiet and reserved. This assignment allowed her to find other students in the class that share her passion for horror films, and as a result she created a connection with another student and developed a new friendship.

Humans have psychological needs that include the sense of belonging, relationships, friendship, love, and a sense of accomplishment. Part of fulfilling those needs is the ability to communicate and express how you are feeling, and many people do that through some form of art. Whether it is through drawing, painting, design, sculpture, writing, dance, or photography,

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using art as a means of expressing ourselves helps us communicate as human beings. Some people find it difficult to express themselves verbally and art can be a creative outlet for those people to share their ideas with others. Art can allow anyone to be expressive, regardless of whether or not they are “good” at art or consider themselves a true artist.