

Amber Pierce

Teaching Philosophy

I chose the path of art education because of my own transformative experiences within the field. Since I was a child, art is something I use to make sense of the world around me. Art provides me with the language I use to express and empower my opinions and personal learning processes. Understanding different tools, methods, vocabularies, and histories of art, strengthens my ability to highlight and use what I've learned to create visual meaning. In my own practice, the objective of my work continues to become a vehicle or vessel for sharing and story-telling. I intentionally select, combine, and interpret materials that empower and fortify the meaning and function of my work. I celebrate the opportunities for understanding, communion, vulnerability, and agency that art allows each of us, and pursue these experiences within my work as an educator.

As an educator, I believe art is meant to educate and nurture students' ideas, perspectives, morals, and interests. I seek to foster their appreciation for art as a mode of communication by providing them with the tools to develop their own artistic voices.

Our future lies in the transferring of skills and knowledge, this is something I hold very important. One of the greatest facets of art education is the intergenerational sharing of knowledge, traditions, and processes. I want students to realize that artists offer many culture-constructing attributes to society and sharing with others is just one of them. The act of teaching, sharing, and cultivating care are top priorities in my classroom environments. In order to make the most artistic progression and broaden our capacities to learn, establishing an atmosphere of respect and mutual consideration is first and foremost. As an educator, I share

my expectations with students and embody the respect, care, and consideration that I am asking of them. It is directly through the availability of an environment of radical love that students with diverse experiences, personalities, and learning needs can find the support and opportunity to learn. James Baldwin, in *Letters from a Region in My Mind*, says: "Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word 'love' here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being... in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth."

I believe the practice of empathy is the most important tool to inspire effective art education. Seeing all learners as individuals and remaining open to what they choose to share, I work to maintain a positive teacher/student relationship by voicing boundaries and expectations and then holding students accountable for maintaining those boundaries and striving for defined expectations.

I recognize that every student learns differently and requires individual and fluctuating attention, direction, and care. Humans receive and process information in their own unique way, therefore, I feel that my responsibility is to guide not to mold. Allowing for choice and providing room for happy accidents and new modes of thinking prompts my students to value exploration, questioning, and discovery. Emotional intelligence is the primary tool I use to cultivate environments where learners are celebrated for whom they are while being healthily challenged to grow and contribute. An ability to work through questions and problems and explore deeper understandings of humanity is what I aspire for my students to experience.

Art allows a lens through which we can interact with and understand the voices of the world. Students will learn to be life-long learners as they are exposed to a variety of content material. I value the many ways that artists choose to express themselves. Through exposure to many different artists and materials, students will learn to value diversity in art as we experience

a wide range of contemporary and historical artists. Highlighting art from a variety of cultural identities enriches art education, further develops empathy, allows students to inform their own techniques, and gives them the ability to envision themselves as an artist.

I hold the responsibilities within the acts of teaching and creating very highly. I place a lot of importance on process-based learning and implementing learned skills and techniques to empower students' creativity. The fusion of skill-building, experimentation, choice, artistic research, and individuality describes the process I expect of my students. My focus aligns with infusing compassion, critical thinking, and creativity in my interactions with my work, my students, and organizations. By providing material and opportunities, I seek to cultivate fundamental skills to help students navigate their own exploration of life, identity, and future pursuits.