

Introduction

My Choice Based Art Classroom

My goal as a *Choice - Based Art Educator* is to promote proficiency through choice, while nurturing a reflective student-artist . While I support the Teaching for Artistic Behavior (T.A.B.) method, I am not a T. A. B. teacher. In my research over the years, I came across T.A.B. and incorporated some of their suggestions but I have never had T.A.B. training. My method is a mixture of various educational philosophies such as Reggio Emilia and Montessori and my own experiences as an artist and educator.

What follows is a resource unit based on 12 years of classroom experience, student assessments, surveys and revision based on student need. These resources were created to work in a Proficiency Based system but the real focus is on teaching the practice of reflection in order to promote student growth in the creative process. ... reflection on LGs and personal intent...

In my current position, I teach art K - 12. I see elementary classes once a week, for 45 minutes to an hour. Middle & High School students have art 4 days a week in 40 minute periods and 80 minute blocks. Below, I will specify how these resources fit within various grade spans. In addition to Power Standards and Learning Goals, I will provide relevant strategies and resources to assist you in providing reflective choice to your students. First, I want to make a few clarifications, offer some helpful hints and express the benefits of a choice based art room.

What Choice Is and What it Is Not

- First, Choice is not “free time.”
- Students must demonstrate their level of procedural and declarative knowledge.
- It is an opportunity for students to authentically engage in the creative process.
- Like *Direct Instruction* lessons, this is a time when students develop their skills; but, with choice, they can choose to build on their strengths or work on their weaknesses.
- The ultimate goal should be for students to create a body of work that reflects their personal experience.
- It gives students the opportunity to work in a studio environment.
- The studio atmosphere encourages “on the spot” interaction and critique with peers.
- It nurtures critical thinking, creative problem solving and a sense of responsibility.

The Classroom becomes a Studio; The Physical Layout of a Choice Based Classroom

- Classroom Design should encourage exploration of materials.
- Supplies, should be accessible to students. (You won't have time to run around and get things for everyone and also, ownership of materials allows them to feel like an artist in the studio and it encourages responsibility.)
- ...storage of artwork
- Another helpful hint is to put medium based Table signs to contain mess and to avoid mixing of messy materials with computers, etc. For example, on table might be "Computers" another, "Painting" or "Clay."

Classroom Management

- Pre Assess! Know where your students are skill wise and in regards to maturity in the art room. Let students assess their behavior. Create a monitoring system that allows you to periodically check in with students on how they are contributing to the "studio atmosphere." Allow the students to assess themselves then give feedback.
- Assess & Celebrate Studio Growth! In order to foster studio behavior, set expectations and design a school wide growth chart so students can watch their growth with a behavior related goal (ie. Studio Habit of Mind; Developing Craft) At the elementary level, students are not in competition with each other. Rather, each class sets their own goal and they need to meet it in order to continue earning "choice sessions" ***Visuals will be attached**
- Before opening studios, assess their readiness level with various materials. Have they used oil pastels before? Do they know how to hand build with clay? etc. Before opening studios review each material. You can do this as an informal assessment via Q & A or a more formal assessment that involves students engaging in mini lessons to demonstrate abilities with various skills and materials.

Implementation Summaries by Grade Span

Early Elementary: K - 2

- At this level I alternate between Direct Instruction (D.I.) and Choice. Because they are learning foundational skills and knowledge, it is mostly D.I. but with open ended assignments that allow for choice in regards to how they answer the problem.
- Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) are used to introduce themes, artists or for making for connections and brainstorming, as well as developing critique skills creation
- Students are responsible for Self Assessment at the end of a project. This is done in two parts. The first part is a whole group exercise where the class discusses and creates a narrative regarding materials, tools, techniques and skills. The 2nd part is individual where students write about their successes and overall experience. These writings are hung with the work when it is exhibited. It is also acts as an “art note” so the student’s experience is shared at home.

Upper Elementary & Middle School

- At this level I still alternate between Direct Instruction (D.I.) and Choice. But, because they are building on foundational skills and knowledge, there is still D.I. (with open ended assignments) but there is more opportunity for choice sessions. These are 3 - 4 week periods where students, guided by the standards, design and plan their art projects.
- Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) are used to introduce themes, artists or for making for connections and brainstorming, as well as developing critique skills creation
- Students are responsible for documenting their experience from the planning stage to the Self Assessment at the end of a project.

High School

- Focus at this stage is on Artist Purpose and the Creative Process. Throughout the year, using various writing prompts, Digital Portfolio reflections as well as project self - assessments, students work toward writing an Artist Statement . This statement accompanies their exhibition at the art show.
- While the focus at this level is mainly on choice based projects, I do require weekly Art Connections and sketchbook assignments as well as workshops (as needed) to review and introduce new materials and techniques.
- Weekly Art Connections: the Art World (videos, articles, etc) , Art Prompts, Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) are used to introduce themes, artists or for making for connections and brainstorming,
- Weekly Sketchbook Assignments to encourage creative problem solving and various drawing skills.
- Students are responsible for documenting their experience from the planning stage to the Self Assessment at the end of a project (sketchbook, research, on-going critiques, self assessment, digital portfolio entry and exhibition).
- Mid and end of the year Exhibition with critique (and Artist Statement at the final exhibition).