

# **Teaching for Artistic Behavior: Choice–Based Art**

Excerpts from  
The Knowledge Loom: Educators Sharing and Learning Together  
Web site  
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# The Knowledge Loom: Educators Sharing and Learning Together

<http://knowledgeloom.org>

The attached document is a user-generated download of selected content found on The Knowledge Loom Web site. Content on The Knowledge Loom is always being updated and changed. **Check online for the most current information.**

## What is The Knowledge Loom?

The Knowledge Loom is an online professional development resource featuring specially organized spotlights on high-priority education issues, including:

- a list of promising practices (including an explanation of each practice and a summary of the research or theories that support the practice)
- stories about the practices in action in actual education settings
- lists of related resources found on other web sites.

The site is designed to help educators facilitate decision-making, planning, and benchmarking for improved teaching and learning through collaborative activities.

## Are there other resources on The Knowledge Loom?

In addition to printable content, the site features interactive tools that allow users to share information and knowledge, read what panels of practitioners have to say about selected topics, ask questions of content experts, and print custom documents like this one. A companion guidebook, *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* (<http://knowledgeloom.org/guidebook>), can be downloaded. It offers activities and graphic organizers to support collaborative inquiry about what works in teaching and learning in support of school improvement.

## What spotlight topics are currently available?

- Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Elementary Literacy
- Good Models of Teaching with Technology
- Leadership Principles in Technology
- Middle School Mathematics
- Principal as Instructional Leader
- Redesigning High Schools to Personalize Learning
- School, Family, and Community Partnerships
- Successful Professional Development
- Teaching for Artistic Behavior: Choice-Based Art



# Overview of Spotlight: Teaching for Artistic Behavior: Choice–Based Art

This overview provides an outline of all content components of this spotlight that are published on The Knowledge Loom Web site. The creator of this document may have printed only selected content from this spotlight. View complete content online (<http://knowledgeloom.org/>).

These practices, for the most part, are based on research outside the field of art. They draw from well–respected findings in the fields of learning theory, psychology, sociology, and business. Their founding principle is a belief in the importance and impact of personalized learning.

## Practices

Each practice includes an explanation, a summary of each story that exemplifies the practice, a research summary (review of the literature), a reference list of the literature, and a short list of related Web resources (URLs and full annotations provided online or in the Related Web Resources section if it has been printed).

- **PERSONAL CONTEXT** — Choice–based art education regards students as artists and offers students real choices for responding to their own ideas and interests through art making.
- **PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT** — Choice–based art education supports multiple modes of learning and teaching.
- **CLASSROOM CONTEXT** — Choice–based art education provides resources and opportunities to construct knowledge and meaning in the process of making art.
- **ASSESSMENT** — Choice–based art education utilizes multiple forms of assessment to support student and teacher growth.

## Stories

The Stories correspond to the summaries printed as part of each practice published on The Knowledge Loom. These are detailed examples of how the practices look in action in educational settings.

Cabot Elementary School, Pauline Joseph's K–5 Art Class  
Central School, K–3 Art Show  
Choice–Based Private Studio Art Class  
Diane Jaquith's K–5 Art Class, Burr School  
Freetown–Lakeville Middle School, Lakeville, MA  
John Crowe: A Long Road to Choice  
Katherine Douglas's K–3 Art Class, Central School

## Related Web Resources: 45

This is an annotated list of resources found on other Web sites that relate to the spotlight topic on The Knowledge Loom.

Massachusetts College of ArtTeaching for Artistic Behavior Partnership



# Practices

This section presents the Knowledge Loom practices for the spotlight you selected.

Each practice includes an explanation, a summary of each story that exemplifies the practice, a research summary (review of the literature), a reference list of the literature, and a short list of related Web resources (URLs and full annotations provided online or in the Related Web Resources section of this document).

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Overview of Spotlight located earlier in the document.

## **PERSONAL CONTEXT -- Choice-based art education regards students as artists and offers students real choices for responding to their own ideas and interests through art making.**

Personal context focuses on two essential elements: (1) developing students as artists and (2) providing real choices.

### **Students as Artists**

The student is the artist. This statement is the foundation on which the concept of choice-based teaching and learning is built. In an authentic choice-based environment, students have control over subject matter, materials, and approach. As art is created from the meaningful content of students' lives, teachers will find that interesting issues related to multiculturalism and visual culture will arise. Students and teachers can address these issues in an ongoing and organic manner to shape student self-discovery and learning.

### **Real Choices**

Choice allows teachers and students to honor authentic learning processes and value intrinsic motivation. Students who believe in their work are motivated and engaged. Brain-compatible teaching and learning is appropriate and desirable for enhancing art making. Opportunities for scribbling, experimentation, and play are necessary experiences for beginners. Student understanding is the goal.

### **Questions to Think About**

1. How can you provide for students who will come to class needing structure or ideas?
2. If students have true choices about what they create, how can you handle subject matter that might be construed as inappropriate for the school setting? Should you establish parameters from the beginning or deal with this on a case-to-case basis?
3. What strategies can you use with the student who repeats ideas for the sole admiration of his peers with no apparent growth over substantial time?

## **Story Summaries**

### ***Choice-Based Private Studio Art Class***

Choice-based art education allows students to choose topics and materials for exploration, provides relevant and brief instruction, and covers a broad range of topics in art history, techniques, and materials. The results are a collaborative learning environment, increased motivation to learn, and the development of artistic behavior, such as problem-solving and decision-making abilities. This model of teaching can be applied in public schools as well as private studio art classes, as this story shows.

- Private art classes for students of mixed ages
- Using professional artist's experiences to design choice-based teaching strategies
- Adapting the classroom environment to meet all students' needs and interests

Professional artist Cheryl McCabe has offered private art classes in her home using choice-based teaching strategies for years. This approach has helped students find their personal voice while learning techniques and skills. McCabe created a successful learning environment by examining her own needs as a practicing artist and providing a setting that meets the artistic needs of her students. The special needs of one difficult-to-teach student motivated McCabe to expand choices for all her students. In so doing, McCabe learned more about teaching, as her students learned more about being artists.

### ***Freetown–Lakeville Middle School, Lakeville, MA***

- serving over 500 students in weekly choice-based art classes at a suburban middle school
- helping students generate ideas for art making and take initiative in their learning
- meeting the challenges of first-year teaching and of introducing the choice-based art education concept to students, parents, and administrators

In addition to the typical challenges a first-year teacher faces, Lindsey Harden set out to introduce a new concept — choice-based art education — to the Freetown–Lakeville Middle School in Lakeville, Mass. Choice-based art education offers students the resources, guidance, and freedom to explore their interests in learning centers dedicated to different art media.

Harden had three main goals: (1) to encourage students to formulate their own ideas for art making; (2) to encourage experimentation with various media; and (3) to create a learning environment where all students could be successful. In addition, she was accountable for the assessment of each student's progress. With the support of the school principal, Dr. Jeanne Bonneau, Harden established a choice-based art classroom, and the students' artwork — from winged costumes to flying aircraft — soared.

## **Research Summary**

### Research Summary for Personal Context

The foundation of this practice is the belief in the student as artist, which places primary control and decision making in the hands of the student rather than the teacher. Choice-based art education offers students real control (Cotter, 2002). Instead of producing "school art," this practice solicits the student's authentic art and recognizes that students' lives and play are important and rich sources of subject matter (Effland, 1976; Smith, 1995; London, 1989, 1999; Szekely, 1988). Students determine relevant content and are free to address issues that break the mold of a one-size-fits-all lesson (Douglas, 2001). Students alone decide what holds potential for personal exploration and specialization (Douglas, 2001; Szekely, 1988, 2002; Coles, 1992; Burton, 2000; Sullivan, 1993).

The open-ended nature of the choice-based classroom offers the student a fresh confidence in approaching art. London (1989) writes, "Once we create imagery that honestly represents how life feels from the inside, there is a deep sense of personal empowerment and a new degree of private certainty." Opportunities for scribbling and play are provided in the choice-based art classroom. This is not only a necessary component of art making, but part of human learning for beginners (Gardner, 1982; Szekely, 1989; Thompson, 1995).

When students' lives are considered important and appropriate material for art making, the variety of backgrounds and interests allow multicultural and visual culture references to emerge in the work.

(Eisner, 2001; Quick-to-See Smith, 1995; London, 1989) Such recognition of students' lives promotes the kind of social interaction fundamental to the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1962). The community of learners contributes to the formation of knowledge; according to constructivist theory, all knowledge is built on prior knowledge and no knowledge is independent of the meaning ascribed to it by the learner or community of learners (Vygotsky, 1978; Kohn, 1993; Kamii, 1991; Parnell, 1996).

For optimal learning the student must be involved in choosing the nature and content of their learning path (Dewey, 1938; Rogers, 1977; Bandura, 1982; Cobb, 1989). Students who have control over subject matter, materials, and approach are more responsible for their learning (Cotter, 2002; Flowerday, 2000; Burton, 1991; Thompson, 1995; Andrews, 2001). Students who are given choices take more risks and take on larger challenges than standard curricula might suggest (Hart, 1983; Kovalic, 1994). Students who believe in their own work are motivated and engaged (LaChapelle, 1991; Emery, 1989; Flowerday, 2000). Bandura's (1982) theory of social learning and self-efficacy notes that one's sense of self influences one's choices, effort, and persistence.

Students are intrinsically motivated when allowed to direct their own learning experience and when they feel their efforts are worthwhile (DeCharms, 1968; Bandura, 1982; Glasser, 1990; Csikzentmihalyi & Nakamura, 1989; Deci & Ryan, 1992). Working at appropriate levels of challenge incites intrinsic rewards through achievement (Vygotsky, 1978; Kohn, 1993). The brain has its own reward system for achievement. Biological and chemical mechanisms in the brain trigger the feelings of well-being and elation that accompany true accomplishment (Nakamura, 1993).

Constructivist theory states that new knowledge is constructed on the foundation of previous knowledge for the purpose of understanding (Vygotsky, 1968; 1972). Brain research suggests relevancy increases neural communication, strengthening the brain (Jensen, 1998). The brain elicits patterns to make a meaningful context (Kovalik, 1994; Bruce & Green, 1990). Research tells us we all have natural, pattern-seeking behavior, which some suggest is innate (Frantz, 1961). By practicing art, the human brain rewires itself to make stronger connections, engaging multiple intelligences (Kolb & Whishaw, 1990).

Emotions are a critical source of information for learning (LeDoux, 1993, 1994, 1996; Hooper & Teresi, 1986; Hobson, 1994). In *Teaching With The Brain in Mind* (1998), Jensen links current brain research and learning theory to the subject of meaning. Learner relevancy engages the emotions and triggers chemical mechanisms that signal the brain to retain important information (Hooper & Teresi, 1986). Emotions engage meaning and predict future learning because they involve our goals, beliefs, biases, and expectancies (Cytowic, 1993; Le Doux 1996).

Emotions stimulate body awareness, creativity, and a sense of self (Williams, 1977). Emotions drive attention, create meaning, and have their own memory pathways (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1994). The artistic process engages many faculties but most significantly emotions and decision making. Artists frequently use feelings to determine what to do next. Emotions can help inform quality, value-based decisions and recall memories (Christianson, 1992). Our ability to discriminate is not solely cognitive. It involves calling on emotions that are processed unconsciously (Cytowic, 1993; LeDoux, 1996). The systems of emotion and cognition are virtually inseparable (Hobson, 1994; LeDoux 1996).

Teachers help children clarify their own values by helping them to make choices from alternatives and to consider the consequences of those choices (Raths, 1966). Constance Kamii (1991) writes, "We cannot expect children to accept ready-made values and truths all the way through school, and then suddenly make choices in adulthood. Likewise, we cannot expect them to be manipulated with

reward and punishment in school, and to have the courage of a Martin Luther King in adulthood." We deprive students of meaningfulness if we ignore the emotional components of what we teach (Caine &Caine, 1994). Brain-compatible teaching should inform effective art teaching (Sullivan, 1989). In the choice-based art classroom, meaning ultimately can create student understanding (Eisner, 2001; Brooks &Brooks, 1993; Sullivan, 1993).

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## **Related Web Resources**

Coming Up Taller Report (1)

Social Development Theory (9)

## **PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT -- Choice-based art education supports multiple modes of learning and teaching.**

In a choice-based art classroom, students, teachers, and resources interact in multiple ways for teaching and learning. The various modes of instruction include:

### **Teacher Roles**

Teaching comes in many forms: direct and indirect (through visuals and references), whole-group demonstrations and discussions, small groups of students who choose a particular exploration, and one-to-one teacher to student interaction. This is possible because student independence is encouraged. The teacher's roles include demonstrating, modeling, facilitating, coaching, providing content, and altering that content as a result of observations made in class.

### **Student Roles**

Students provide much of the instruction. Student "experts" who work in one medium over time serve as coaches and peer tutors, enjoying further learning in the process. Student discoveries are shared with classmates and teachers. Students form cooperative groups in an organic manner. In this way, a great deal of information is transmitted student to student.

### **Art Resources**

The resources of the world of art, past and present, are available to students who find connections to their work in reproductions, books, Web sites, and multi-media materials. An evolving, open-system curriculum fosters an organic learning process.

### **Questions to Think About:**

1. How can the whole-group demonstrations reflect local curriculum needs while offering choice to students?
2. What are some of the ways that art history resources can be shared with children in a choice-based classroom?
3. What sorts of community building activities can encourage peer teaching and learning?

## **Story Summaries**

### ***Katherine Douglas's K-3 Art Class, Central School***

Choice-based art education

- allows students to choose topics and materials for exploration
- provides relevant and brief instruction
- covers a broad range of topics in art history, techniques, and materials
- creates a collaborative learning environment
- optimizes students' intrinsic motivation to learn
- fosters artistic behavior: creativity, innovation, independence, decision making, and problem solving

Choice-based teaching and learning is an opportunity for dynamic exchange between teacher and student. In this model, students choose topics for exploration and, in response, the teacher presents relevant instruction and creates a learning environment conducive to artistic behavior. The curriculum is investigated in depth within the context of topics chosen by student artists.

Faced with high academic standards and broad responsibilities, children can use art to process what they see, know, and learn. By arranging classroom as studios and effectively organizing the space, time, and materials, teachers create an environment that enables students to create compelling art work that expresses their individuality. Just as artists embrace playfulness, unpredictability, and the drive to create personal meaning, a choice-based classroom capitalizes on these attributes and helps students use artistic behavior to learn. As a result, student investment, teacher enthusiasm, and expressive images emerge in public school art studios using the choice-based teaching model.

### ***John Crowe: A Long Road to Choice***

- development of choice-based art education program serving 300 elementary school students
- establishment of learning centers for a variety of media and content areas
- use of curricular themes to structure students' investigation of topics that are important to them
- creation of a unique assessment system, using visual icons, a self-evaluation process, and individualized teacher-student feedback

As professor of art at Bridgewater State College, John Crowe developed an art education program for 300 elementary students at the affiliated Campus Lab School. He developed a curriculum structure that fostered student choice and engagement, learning centers in a variety of media and content areas, and an assessment system that communicated to students, parents, and administrators about the artistic and personal progress that each student was making. His evolving teaching methods have succeeded in engaging students in directing their own learning. For over 30 years, John Crowe has been testing his theories about art education through working directly with students of all ages and collaborating with educators.

## **Research Summary**

### **Research Summary for Pedagogical Context**

Using this concept of teaching, educators have at their disposal a number of strategies for sharing information and can assume a variety of roles, including instructor, model, observer, and coach. Direct teaching has an important place in the choice-based classroom (Denning, 1998). Effective, focused demonstrations provide efficient means of communication and present information relating to the challenges and problems that the students face (Douglas, 1993; Stankiewicz, 2001; Saphier, 1987; Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Dunn & Larson, 1990; Saphier, 1987).

Whole-group teaching is one of the ways knowledge flows in the classroom yet describes only one of the roles of the teacher. Because students are encouraged to choose independent work, the teacher is able to work with small groups and even one-to-one with students (Tinzmann, et. al., 1990). When teachers do not have to be constantly at the head of the class, they are able to model art making, which is an effective teaching technique (Earnst, 1994; Holt, 1983; Tinzmann, et al, 1990). As an observer, the teacher can monitor student behavior, pinpoint problems, plan for future demonstrations, and highlight the amazing discoveries that emerge in the course of a day's class (Earnst, 1994; Douglas, 1993; Davilla & Koenig, 1998; International Reggio Exchange; Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Dunn

&Larson, 1990; Szekely, 1991). The observant teacher, freed from micromanagement of the class, can facilitate happenings in the art room (CYERT; Dunn, 1990; Omaois, 1998; Rettig, 1999; Tinzmann, et. al., 1990; Brooks &Brooks, 1993). By observing student progress, the teacher can also plan for appropriate future content (Tinzmann, et. al., 1990; Chapman, 1992; Parks, 1992; Saphier, 1987). In this model, a key role for the teacher is as coach and encourager of each student's independent work (Read, 1956; Tinzmann, et. al., 1990; Johnson &Johnson, 1990).

The students themselves provide an enormous part of the pedagogy in the choice-based art class. Peer tutoring and collaborative learning happen organically, organized by the students. Students who work with a particular medium or line of thought over time gain an expertise that they can share with their classmates, thereby becoming student experts (Rettig, 1999; Szekely, 1988). The knowledge and self-esteem gained in this manner has an extensive research base (Ede, 1987; Goodlad &Hirst, 1989; [www.mathforum.org](http://www.mathforum.org); Ngeow, 1988; Panitz, 1999; Johnson &Johnson, 1990; Dunn &Larson, 1990). In addition, student-initiated work that emerges in a holistic manner can ensure that the multiple intelligences of students have the opportunity to find expression (Rettig, 1999; Brooks &Brooks, 1993; Szekely, 1988; Saphier, 1987; London, 1989; Assoc. Human Psychology; Gardner, 1990; Jenson, 2001).

The teacher's goal is to create a community of artists, where the discourse and observations of each other's work can enlighten students and teacher alike (Johnson &Johnson, 1990; [www.mathforum.org](http://www.mathforum.org); Russell, 2002; Szekely, 1988; Thompson, 2002; Thompson &Bales, 1991; Ulbricht, 1999; Brooks &Brooks, 1993; London, 1994). This community can possess many aspects of the communities of practicing adult artists (Guggenheim, 1998).

The larger community of world artists, past and present, is an important influence in the choice-based classroom. When given large print and virtual resources, students are able to connect with the work of artists in a way that is personal and, therefore, more meaningful and useful to their work (Guggenheim, 1998; Katan, 1990; Szekely, 1991).

Such an emergent, open-system curriculum, which is oriented to the big-picture as opposed to being linear and sequential, allows students to learn at their best, to be fully engaged and able to take on the role of artists (Williams, 1983; Jenson, 2001, Brooks &Brooks, 1993; Dunn &Larson, 1990; Kowalchuk, 1999; London, 1994; Szekely, 1988; Stankiewicz, 2001; Rettig, P. &Rettig, J., 1999; Brooks &Brooks, 1993; Dunn &Larson, 1990).

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## Related Web Resources

44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning by Ted Panitz (5)  
Catalogue of School Reform Models (20)  
Challenging Gifted Students in Regular Classrooms (13)  
Concept to Classroom: Constructivism as a Paradigm for Teaching and Learning (21)  
Constructivist Learning Theory (14)  
Design to Learn (I/DEPPE/I) (11)  
Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) by Susan Kovalik (15)  
Multiple Intelligences (18)  
Ride the Wave to Success in the Classroom (16)  
Theory Into Practice (TIP) Database (19)  
What's Basic: A Constructivist's View (33)

# **CLASSROOM CONTEXT -- Choice-based art education provides resources and opportunities to construct knowledge and meaning in the process of making art.**

The ideal learning environment supports student learning through the effective structure of time, the careful arrangement of space, thoughtfully chosen materials, and a method of classroom management that allows teachers to respond to student needs.

## **Structuring time**

Whole-group demonstrations are brief and frequent. Students are exposed to many art concepts and may choose to try something new every week or to continue working on one piece for an extended period of time. The permanent arrangement of materials in centers allows students to plan art works in advance of the weekly class.

## **Arranging space**

The classroom can be arranged to accommodate an enormous number of resources and materials and to facilitate both group and independent work. An attractive environment is an inspiration to art makers.

## **Managing materials**

Organized arrangements of materials allow students to access and return what they need. This added responsibility is a learning opportunity. Choosing materials is an important part of the artistic process.

## **Providing instruction**

The organized learning centers contain materials, resources, and written directions and allow for students to continue the work of their choice weekly, while the teacher can interact with students in multiple ways.

## **Questions to Think About**

1. How can you arrange materials in your classroom so that students can find what they need?
2. How can you use existing materials to offer choices in centers?
3. Will you find it necessary to limit the number of children choosing some activities? If so, how can record keeping make the process easy and fair?
4. Given the age of your students, how can you display visual resources, menus, and directions in your classroom?
5. How can you use communication with parents, teachers, and administrators to introduce and advocate for your program?

## **Story Summaries**

### ***Diane Jaquith's K-5 Art Class, Burr School***

- serving 300 students in grades K through 5 in weekly choice-based art classes
- capitalizing on the learning potential of transition times at the beginning and ending of class

- fostering the creative, collaborative, and consistent environment that elementary school students need
- exposing students to varied instruction in concept, technique, aesthetics, and art history
- revising teaching strategies based on what students show they need

At Burr School in Newton, Mass., art teacher Diane Jaquith has transformed transition times into enriching teaching opportunities. Bringing students together at the beginning and ending of class creates a community of artist learners. In these class meetings, students first participate in group experiences and later share their work.

With eight of her twenty years' teaching experience in elementary schools, Jaquith continually revises her strategies based on what students show they need. Since creating a choice-based classroom six years ago, Diane Jaquith uses this method to help all students work toward district outcomes. By gradually refining group instructional time, she exposes students to varied instruction in concept, technique, aesthetics, and art history.

### *Cabot Elementary School, Pauline Joseph's K-5 Art Class*

- Choice-based art classroom served 364 students, grades K- 5, in weekly classes.
- Learning centers provided a wide range of experiences in drawing, painting, simple printmaking, clay, construction and design, fiber arts, and digital art.
- Each center was filled with neatly organized and labeled supplies, plus illustrative materials, references, visual reproductions, books, and art vocabulary words.
- The same standards (art content, skills, etc.) as traditional art education were embedded in each center.
- Some traditional lessons and specialized, temporary centers enhanced the curriculum.
- Students experienced concepts and materials many times, thereby reinforcing understanding and building skills.
- When working in the centers, students made real choices and were engaged in their work.

Thirty years ago, Pauline Joseph developed her art room into a Visual Resource Studio with seven learning centers to support her students as artists. Many factors, including experiences with other educators and students, propelled Joseph to develop a choice-based learning environment that fostered a true partnership between teacher and students. Filled with neatly organized supplies, clear instructions, and books of all types, the learning centers provided rich opportunities for breadth and depth of learning. Students chose the materials they worked with and made choices and decisions just as artists do. The teacher supported their explorations and capitalized on ways to make connections to art history, cultural topics, and new techniques. Joseph even created temporary, specialized centers to provide more opportunities for students to explore. The curriculum combined independent work in the learning centers with traditional lessons and was aligned with local visual art standards.

## **Research Summary**

### Research Summary for Classroom Context

The goal of an open-ended learning environment is "to immerse learners in rich experiences, using various tools, resources, and activities with which to augment or extend thinking" (Hannafin, Hill, & Land, 1997). An ideal learning environment is structured to support student learning and growth physically, emotionally, and developmentally. Elements such as effectively structured time, carefully

arranged space, and thoughtfully chosen materials are the basis for classroom management. Providing choice-based learning centers allows the teacher to respond to student needs and key in on teachable moments.

## **TIME**

Established routines, such as having students sit in "listening seats" at the beginning and ending of class, provide "a similarity of environment (actions, feelings, formats, routines) that keys students into their environment" and "turns on their operators for that particular kind of activity" (Saphier & Gower, 1997). The effective use of starting time (for new material and review) and ending time (for review and assessment) targets students' ability to remember what happens at the beginning and end of a class period (Saphier & Gower, 1997).

In the choice-based art classroom, students are invited to structure time to fit the needs of their learning styles and the work that they have chosen (Baker, 2001; Ediger, 1999). Hart (1983) writes, "Where the setting offers mastery with a good deal of freedom of choice, students will...take on surprising risks, and often make good on them. But the setting must allow the time and continuity the projects require. Conversely, students held to short efforts that can be completed within a factory-school time frame are being effectively prevented and discouraged from building experience in undertakings that demand more planning, dedication, and perseverance, qualities normally regarded as of high value." The teacher plans for whole-class, direct instruction to be brief, leaving more time for the students to work (Douglas, 1993).

## **SPACE**

The arrangement of space is of great importance in the choice-based classroom (Cyert; Szekely, 1988; Ediger, 2001; Baker, 1999, Johnson et al, 1990). As New (1993) states, "The environment informs and engages the viewer." Saphier & Gower (1997) discuss observations made in effective classrooms, where every inch of space is used productively and the design encourages positive student activity, organized traffic patterns, and a comfortable noise level. An orderly environment helps students to achieve more optimally. The teacher needs to evaluate the learning environment continually and make any changes necessary to motivate student learning (Ediger, 1999).

New (1993) writes, "Other supportive elements of the environment include ample space for supplies, frequently arranged to draw attention to their aesthetic features...clearly designated spaces for large- and small-group activities...designed to encourage playful encounters. It is no wonder that Reggio Emilia teachers refer to the environment as OUR THIRD TEACHER."

## **MATERIALS**

The organization of materials is a key component of the choice-based classroom (Szekely, 1988; Douglas, 1993; Perrone, 1989; Ediger, 1999). Perrone (1989) explains, "Children know what learning materials—paint, brushes, wood ...—are available and where they are stored as well as understand that they have virtually complete access to them. If children must ask permission to use the items, which usually involves waiting, or do not know what is available, they may well lose interest or have limited opportunities for exploring new areas. It should be noted, too, that the children do things for themselves—mix paints, clean brushes. ... These simple chores are part of the process of earning self-reliance and responsibility."

Materials that the students use should be visibly stored and accessible to facilitate efficient getting and putting away (Saphier & Gower, 1997). "Concrete materials stimulate and motivate pupil learning"

(Ediger, 1999). "Students who are given the responsibility to select their own materials and tools are more resourceful as they develop competence and skill through exploration of the materials" (Linderman, 1974). All materials should be usable independently after minimal introduction (Lowenfeld, 1987; Smith, 1995; Douglas, 1993).

The classroom is organized around various learning centers (Douglas, 1993; Baker, 2000; Ediger, 1999). Learning center experiences also help children develop a sense of responsibility, as well as problem-solving and decision-making skills. The multiple techniques and methods used in centers accommodate different learning styles. At centers, children have a chance to collaborate with others and to work with a variety of materials and activities. Children plan, select, and assess their learning (Baker, 2000). "Semi-concrete materials (illustrations, slides, videotapes, filmstrips, CDs, computer software and personal computers) as well as films should also be located at each station" (Ediger, 1999). Centers contain menus, adult exemplars, and student exemplars (Saphier & Gower, 1997; Douglas, 1993; Ediger, 1999).

## **INSTRUCTION**

"In teaching art to children the most important element is the teacher, for the teacher has the important task of providing an atmosphere conducive to inventiveness, exploration, and production" (Lowenfeld, 1987). By providing direct instruction through a demonstration accompanied by explanation and visuals, teachers are able to appeal to a variety of learners (Gardner, 1990).

"Educators who teach in a constructivist manner respond to students and help them make connections and foster expanded knowledge by encouraging analysis and interpretation through open-ended questions and student dialogue" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). In choice-based classrooms, experiences are varied and open-ended (Linderman, 1974; Lowenfeld, 1987; Baker, 2000). They provide ample opportunities for student learning, allow for individual differences and learning styles, and are, by their nature, developmentally appropriate (Ediger, 1995; Baker, 2000).

## **CHOICE**

A student-centered approach to teaching "enables individuals to address their unique learning interests and needs, examine content at multiple levels of complexity, and deepen understanding" (Land, 1996). Flowerday and Schraw's phenomenological study about teacher beliefs in instructional choice indicates that teachers strongly support choice as a way to improve "affective response by increasing students' ownership, interest, creativity, and personal autonomy." A number of proponents of choice-based teaching and learning have made this claim (Deci, 1992; Kamii, 1991; Kohn, 1993). The philosophy of learning station use is that students will achieve more if they may choose what to pursue and what to omit (Ediger, 1999). As Eisner (1999) writes, "We are the shapers of the environment, stimulators, motivators, guides, consultants, resources. But in the end, what children make of what we provide is a function of what they construe from what we offer. Meanings are not given, they are made."

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## Related Web Resources

Different Ways of Knowing K–7 (31)

Reggio Emilia Approach (2)

## **ASSESSMENT -- Choice-based art education utilizes multiple forms of assessment to support student and teacher growth.**

Assessment is ongoing and continuous with students showing evidence of learning in their daily activities. Multiple, formative assessments inform teaching, resulting in materials and instruction that are closely aligned with student needs.

- Students are continually apprised of assessment purposes and are given clear and timely feedback about their progress.
- Rubrics that are negotiated between students and teachers establish the criteria for work throughout the year. Criteria should be generalized to fit all centers and affirm all levels of ability.
- Rubrics become class standards for overall performance and provide a basis for student achievement.
- Surveys, questionnaires, and group discussions can help identify student understandings in various content areas.
- Helping students to recognize their own "zone of proximal development," where their knowledge lies and where they can reach, is an important role for the teacher (Vygotsky, 1978). Students are given frequent opportunities to self-assess their progress in various ways.
- Teachers train students to perform self-assessment through introduction and modeling of various assessment tools, such as journals, artist statements, sharing sessions, and presentations.
- Students use information gained in self-assessments to build confidence and measure their progress. Teachers use information gained in self-assessments to redirect individualized and group instruction and to develop new curricula.
- Assessment is often collaborative, between students and/or student(s) and teacher.
- Collaborative assessment may take the form of peer teaching, sharing of work, curating single or group exhibits, discussions, and conferences with the teacher.
- Teachers create manageable methods for documenting student progress utilizing checklists, observations and dialogues, journals, and other self-assessment materials.
- Written evaluations reflect multiple assessments over a period of time.
- Evaluations document student understandings and abilities. In addition to skills, work habits should be acknowledged, including time management, persistence, risk-taking, and focus.
- Teachers should advocate for fair evaluation practices in their school or district, so that student progress can be articulated relative to set standards of the art program and not confined to single letter grades.

### **Questions to Think About**

1. How can your school's current grading system be used to reflect the goals of choice and authentic assessment?
2. What sort of support will students need to help them with time management skills?
3. How can your observations of individual students help you to assess their progress and help them move forward in their learning?
4. What sorts of evaluation can be given over to the students?
5. What varieties of assessment can be integrated into your classroom (e.g., portfolios, conferences, etc.)?

## Story Summaries

### *Central School, K–3 Art Show*

- Choice–based art classroom serving 700–900 students in grades 1 through 3 in weekly classes
- Exhibiting the artwork of 200 third–grade students per year
- Creating an opportunity for student choice as part of assessment
- Engaging the whole school in responding to student art work

At Central Elementary School in East Bridgewater, Mass., Kathy Douglas's innovative approach to teaching art over the past 20 years has created a model for choice–based art education. Douglas has fostered a uniquely collaborative classroom environment in which students can direct their learning by choosing materials and topics they wish to study.

Central to her art class is the concept that the students are artists, and therefore the curriculum explores an authentic artists' experience. The curriculum poses the question, What do artists do? In Douglas's classroom, her artists paint expressionistic work, learn about Matisse, craft puppets, and write fan letters to other student artists. Every March, the students curate a final art show that highlights their work in a variety of media. Because they choose what they wish to exhibit and create artist's statements, the student art show provides an opportunity for students to self–assess their artwork. In addition, the art show creates a way for the school community to acknowledge and respond to their accomplishments.

### *John Crowe: A Long Road to Choice*

- development of choice–based art education program serving 300 elementary school students
- establishment of learning centers for a variety of media and content areas
- use of curricular themes to structure students' investigation of topics that are important to them
- creation of a unique assessment system, using visual icons, a self–evaluation process, and individualized teacher–student feedback

As professor of art at Bridgewater State College, John Crowe developed an art education program for 300 elementary students at the affiliated Campus Lab School. He developed a curriculum structure that fostered student choice and engagement, learning centers in a variety of media and content areas, and an assessment system that communicated to students, parents, and administrators about the artistic and personal progress that each student was making. His evolving teaching methods have succeeded in engaging students in directing their own learning. For over 30 years, John Crowe has been testing his theories about art education through working directly with students of all ages and collaborating with educators.

### *Freetown–Lakeville Middle School, Lakeville, MA*

- serving over 500 students in weekly choice–based art classes at a suburban middle school
- helping students generate ideas for art making and take initiative in their learning
- meeting the challenges of first–year teaching and introducing the concept of choice–based art education to the school and community
- devising multiple modes of assessment of student art work to meet school guidelines while adhering to the concepts of choice–based art education

- communicating the results of choice-based art education to students, parents, and administrators

In addition to the typical challenges a first-year teacher faces, Lindsey Harden set out to introduce a new concept — choice-based art education — to the Freetown-Lakeville Middle School in Lakeville, Mass. Choice-based art education offers students the resources, guidance, and freedom to explore their interests in learning centers dedicated to different art media.

Challenged to evaluate the work of all 500 students in keeping with school guidelines and the tenets of choice-based art education, Harden devised multiple forms of assessment, including rubrics, student self-evaluation, and portfolio development. She also invited parents and administrators to observe art classes in action and to attend open houses where they could view student artwork.

## Research Summary

### Research Summary for Assessment

Performance assessments empower students to assess their work with a view toward developing, experimenting, and expanding their own art and their understanding of the broader context of art in the world. Varied performance assessments measure differentiated learning, resulting in individualized teaching that matches unique student needs (Saphier & Gower, 1997; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998; Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Eisner, 1999; Suskie, 2000).

In constructivist settings, including the choice-based art room, assessment is continuous and constant. Students demonstrate evidence of understandings through the context of their daily work (Barth, 1971; Brooks & Brooks, 1999; Stiggins, 1999). Assessment of students' achievements is collaborative: student to self, student to peers, student to teacher, and teacher to student (Ede, 1987; Dunn & Larson, 1990; Thompson, 2002; Thompson & Bales, 1991; Tinzmann, et al, 1990). In particular, frequent formative assessments increase the learning of low-achieving students (William & Black, 1998).

Self-assessment is essential to student confidence and, ultimately, success in learning (Barth, 1971). Among the opportunities for self-assessment are rubrics, journals, letters to self, discussions with peers and teacher, artist statements, selection of artwork for exhibition, and goal-setting. One of the most popular assessment tools is the rubric, designed with a range of expectations along the continuum from beginner to proficient user (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). When students join the teacher in determining criteria for assessment, they take ownership of their learning (Saphier & Gower, 1997; Stix, 1997). Inviting students to negotiate criteria for assessment and to measure their own progress results in greater autonomy and more positive attitudes toward evaluation (Kohn, 1993).

For students to take an active role in their learning, they need to be aware of their status. Teaching students how to self-assess is a vital role of the teacher. Helping them to recognize their current abilities, clarify goals, and identify strategies is the responsibility of the teacher (Black & William, 1998; Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Wiggins and McTighe (1998) include "self-knowledge" as one of six critical components of understanding.

Knowing when to provide feedback is critical in the choice-based classroom. Holt (1983) encourages teachers to provide time for beginners to explore without intervening questions so they may develop solid understandings through experimentation. Misconceptions are part of learning; by resolving misconceptions, students redirect their learning and move forward (Barth, 1971; New, 1993; Saphier

&Gower, 1997). Errors are inevitable while learning; in a supportive learning environment, improvement will result from failure, especially if students are actively involved in self-assessing their progress (Stiggins, 1999). Students who are having difficulty making choices will benefit by teacher intervention, when the teacher is able to provide observations of past performance and suggestions for expanding repertoires (Hawkins, 1971). Use of open-ended questioning strategies encourages student inquiry and should be thoughtful and inclusive of all students' perspectives (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Documentation of student understandings must reflect individual teachers' methods for maintaining records. Saphier and Gower (1997) recommend checklists, journals, anecdotal notations, and portfolios. Because children in choice-based art programs determine where their artwork goes, one could substitute exhibitions for portfolios, thereby not requiring artwork to remain at school unless by the choice of the artist. Discrepancies arise when performance assessments must be summarized for grading purposes (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Several researchers recommend that teachers advocate for more representative systems for reporting student achievement and reflecting a range of understandings (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Seeley, 1994). Students should be assessed against set standards, never against one another (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Negative impacts result from objective measures of knowledge (Barth, 1971). Evaluations must reflect multiple assessment measures and information, not just scores. This necessitates a change in public attitude toward grading practices to include formative assessment summaries and to create a climate of success in learning (Eisner, 1999; Franklin, 2002; Saphier & Gower, 1997; Suskie, 2000).

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## **Related Web Resources**

Fair Assessment Practices: Giving Students Equitable Opportunities to Demonstrate Learning (17)

Holistic Critical Thinking Rubrics (32)

Kennedy Center Artsedge: Visual Arts Standards and Exemplars (22)

# Stories

This section presents Knowledge Loom stories about classrooms, schools, or districts that exemplify one or more of the practices in the spotlight.

Each story contains a full feature article and a set of facts about how the practice was put into action. Each story lists the practices it exemplifies and the name of the content provider.

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Spotlight Map located earlier in the document.





# Katherine Douglas's K–3 Art Class, Central School

## Katherine Douglas's K–3 Art Class, Central School

E. Bridgewater, MA

**School Type:** Public

**School**

**Setting:** Suburban

**Level:** Elementary

**School**

**Design:** Traditional

**Content Presented By:**

Teaching for Artistic Behavior  
Partnership



When Katherine Douglas presented the choice-based teaching model at the National Art Education Conference in New Orleans, she also revisited the divide between art education and artistic work. As she listened to other sessions, she understood the education speakers' concerns about curriculum issues, standards, and testing, but the undercurrent of all of these meetings was the lack of motivation on the part of the students, the discipline problems, the lack of originality, and so on. Dispirited, Douglas sought out the keynote sessions presented by practicing artists and there heard a very different song: the joy and frustration of creating work, the playfulness, the intense desire to react to life in a personal way, the learning that had to take place so that the artist could make the desired image, looking for new skills, and trying new materials. Douglas noted, "I once again saw my teaching practice in the light of bridging the chasm that separates art education and art making. This chasm was obvious to me long ago when I began my teacher training: I was looked down upon in my studio courses for having made the choice to teach."

For over 25 years, the toolbox for Douglas' teaching has contained the tools of the artist: time, space, and, most important, the creative spirit that she offers her art students. According to Douglas, "The assumption underlying my pedagogy is that the students have a lot to say visually before they ever encounter me; what they lack is a familiarity with the range of media available to them, with the work of artists who have gone before them, and with the elements and principles that form the building blocks. My method is to get them making art, having them first set their own tasks. The instruction takes place as much as possible within the context of the work that they have chosen." Thus, she bridges the divide between art education and artistic work.

This in no way means that there is a lack of structure or instruction in the routine of the choice-based classroom. Each week a 5-minute demonstration for all students explores something of interest: an art history topic, a technique, or materials. Then, students may choose to further explore that aspect or work on another in one of the learning centers. Around the classroom, the learning centers are organized into sections for painting, printing and stamping, mask making, weaving, collage, sculpture, computer, drawing, bookmaking, puppet making, and architecture. A classroom museum of visual resources, books, and tools provides information that all students can access.

The weekly demonstrations address needs that Douglas has observed over 25 years. A significant number of students demonstrate the need for the information to be contained and connected to what they need to know. The timing of the demonstrations varies from year to year and from class to class according to student needs. The arrangement of materials and furniture in the room is also responsive

to the children in a particular class or in a particular year.

"Instead of planning clever motivations that are really my motivations and not the students', my time is spent in working with individual students or small groups, in modeling art making and in careful observation of what is happening in the classroom so that I can plan subsequent demonstrations." Douglas continues: "The joy of this method of teaching is that I never know what I will see coming from my students. Originality is not a problem when the students have been told explicitly that they will make their art and not Mrs. Douglas's art. And because each day is a surprise, I don't get teacher burnout."

Until recently, Douglas met with 30 40-minute classes per week, serving up to 860 students aged five to nine; her current student load is under 700 per week. In order for this to function smoothly, she pays close attention to room arrangement, material organization, and student behavior. Demonstrations are scheduled in a sequence that relates to student needs, while helping children to connect what they already know to what they will be doing in the future. In addition to demonstrations, students see many ideas posted in the centers, use extensive reference files, and view the independently produced work of their fellow students. Given that an average elementary student might receive only 30 40-minute art classes in a year, 'choice' students have seen and heard much more than in a traditional classroom.

Conversations in the classroom often focus on what artists do. Douglas presents the range of approaches and working methods that she has noticed among artists. Some artists:

- follow a particular line of thinking over time, sometimes making a series of similar works over and over again
- make several pieces in a very short time or work for weeks on one tiny part of a piece
- use materials in idiosyncratic ways
- combine materials and genres (e.g., sculpture with painting)
- comment on their personal lives and on popular culture
- often have more than one work in progress
- play with materials
- dream and plan at length without putting anything on paper

Because all of these artistic behaviors are made difficult, if not impossible, within the boundaries of most school art curricula, Douglas nurtures them in the choice-based classroom.

Teaching for artistic behavior sets up the circumstances for art making to happen on a personal and individual basis. Students with multiple learning styles find a prosperous environment in a choice-based classroom's flexibility and open-ended curriculum. When students are given good information and the responsibility to use it, their work often exceeds teacher expectations as students find their artistic voice.

## **Demographics**

The Central School in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts is the only elementary school in a small suburban town south of Boston. The student population has varied over the years from 960 to a current population of about 700 students.

The Central School consists of a preschool class, 10 kindergarten classes, 10 first-grade, 8 second-grade, and 9 third-grade classes. The art program serves children in grades 1–3. Each of the 27 classes comes to the art room for 40 minutes per week. Class size averages 25.

Ethnic composition of students in the school system is

- Asian American 0.5%
- African American 1.6%
- Hispanic 0.5%
- Native American 0.1%
- White 97.3%

Families in East Bridgewater have a median household income of \$42,614.

Five percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

No students are receiving ESL services.

Students who receive special education services are 11.1% of the student population.

## **Background**

### **Design & Implementation**

1. Arrange the classroom into learning centers so that a broad range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional wet and dry media are available in an organized fashion each week.
2. Using your current curriculum, create a series of short demonstrations to begin each class.
3. Balance experiences in drawing, painting, printmaking, collage, sculpture, and fiber arts.
4. Consider the big ideas (symbolism, transformation, variation, imagination, invention) that underlie all instruction.
5. Plan demonstrations to ensure that students can set up their work spaces independently, especially in painting and print making.
6. Plan demonstrations addressing the use of materials: how to tear tape, thread a needle, use a painting palette, etc.
7. Start students with the easiest to manage materials, moving to more complex demonstrations as the students show that they are working well independently.
8. Later demonstrations can address observed student needs or the particular interests found in some classes.
9. Students will need reassurance that they will be able to choose their ideas and the materials that will express them. Students who are not comfortable with choice will need additional support from the teacher and peers.
10. Align the program with state and national standards (Massachusetts Visual Arts Curriculum Frameworks and the National Visual Arts Standards).

### **Results**

- Students have more working time because demonstrations are brief.
- Students gain skill in structuring their time and are able to work at a pace that suits their learning styles.
- Students have the opportunity to become "experts," by exploring one idea or medium over time, working more closely with the teacher in a small group, and teaching peers.
- The teacher is able to expose students to a large number of ideas, techniques, and materials since something new can be demonstrated each week.
- The teacher can call attention to emergent positive behaviors such as taking risks, making multiples, and working in organic cooperative groups.

- The teacher can connect art history and culture references to the personal work of the students.
- Students show interest in the work of artists who have created work that has connections to their own.
- Able to choose their work, students often start where they are strongest and gain confidence to work in areas that are more difficult for them.

### **Replication Details**

1. Make certain that each demonstration contains enough information to get students working, without limiting the style and art ideas that each child will bring to art making.
2. Keep as much flexibility as possible in yearly lesson planning to allow observed student needs to be met.

### **Costs and Funding**

This model of teaching uses general art supplies. The teacher can demonstrate ideas and materials based on what is already available in the school. There need not be any additional costs.

### **Contact Information**

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East Bridgewater, MA 02333  
508-378-8204  
Email: twoducks@aol.com

### **Rating Criteria**

The Central School art program has been a successful choice-based studio program for elementary school students for over 25 years. This program is fully aligned with the Massachusetts Visual Arts Frameworks K-4 and the National Visual Arts Standards. The concept of choice-based teaching has been disseminated at local, regional, and national art education conferences and has been the subject of courses and workshops at Massachusetts College of Art, the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, and Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts. The content for this spotlight was created under the auspices of the LAB at Brown University and the Massachusetts College of Art, bringing together a group of graduate students and current practitioners with up to 30 years of success using the teaching for artistic behavior concept in public school classrooms.

### **Educator Biography**

Katherine Douglas has been an elementary school art teacher in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts since 1972. She has a B.S. in Education from the University of Maryland and a Master's Degree in Integrated Studies from Cambridge College. She has studied with Dr. Peter London in the Drawing From Within Institute and at the Massachusetts College of Art Artist/Teacher Institute.

Douglas is collaborating with a group of artists and educators to further develop and disseminate the Teaching for Artistic Behavior concept, which provides instruction in the context of visual arts work chosen by students. She is a visiting lecturer at the Massachusetts College of Art and is an instructor at Stonehill College in Easton, Mass. She has collaborated in international online educational projects

using technology to connect teachers and students.

Douglas is a practicing artist who works in watercolor and pencil and has recently exhibited at the Herring Run Arts Festival and several shows in East Bridgewater, Mass.

**This story exemplifies the following practices:**

**PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT** -- Choice-based art education supports multiple modes of learning and teaching.

# Central School, K–3 Art Show

## Central School, K–3 Art Show

East Bridgewater, MA

**School Type:** Public

**School  
Setting:** Suburban

**Level:** Elementary

**School  
Design:** Traditional

**Content Presented By:**

Teaching for Artistic Behavior  
Partnership



As a public school art teacher, Kathy Douglas tries to foster an authentic artist's experience for students. Because exhibition is an important part of the artist's experience, she wants to create a similar opportunity for students to show their accomplishments, communicate about their process, and connect to a larger community. For Douglas, creating a student art show presents both wonderful rewards and enormous challenges.

"In the past, I had looked forward to our spring exhibition with a mixture of pride and dread," she says. Like many elementary art teachers, Douglas has a large number of students (700–900). Choosing one piece from each student was overwhelming. "I kept all the finished work in growing piles around my room until it was time to make the choice. Often, the students did not particularly care for the piece I chose; more often, the students were uninterested in my choice." She used to hang the exhibition in the town library, but few people saw the show, and there were too many students involved to have a proper opening reception. Many of the people who did view the show would walk by the work quickly, looking for their own child's piece. There did not seem to be much enthusiasm or appreciation for the work that the children had done. She left wondering: Was this worth our effort? What were the students gaining from the experience?

To address these problems, she developed a choice-based approach to creating a student art show about seven years ago. Now, the spring exhibition has become a highlight of the season. While only the eldest students exhibit, the entire school is able to participate in viewing and responding to the artwork.

The curriculum theme is "What do artists do"? Because artists choose what, when, and how many pieces they wish to show, she invites the students to choose the artwork for the exhibition. Additionally, to decrease the number of artworks in the exhibition, only the eldest children exhibit. At Central School, this is the third grade, which varies in size from 180 to 220 children from year to year. "Having the students participate in curating the exhibition was the biggest change for me and made the project more manageable," says Douglas.

Planning for the show begins in September. At the beginning of the year, she invites the students to leave work for the show in a large marked box. During the fall the box slowly fills up. She does not look at the work until January, when she sorts it by class to see what has accumulated. As she meets with each class, she lays out the work that she has so far, and they discuss preparing for the exhibition. Because some children have taken home artwork that they wish to add, they bring it back

to school.

At this time, a parent volunteer joins the third-grade art classes. She calls students to the computer and invites them to discuss their piece. Acting as a scribe, she types their exact words on the computer and prints them out; this becomes the artist's statement attached to the artwork. Older students can write their own statements, but the teachers found that the children have a lot more to say when they had the services of a scribe.

In January and February, Douglas takes dozens of digital photographs of the students at work; these too become part of the exhibition. She also makes big printouts of quotations from famous artists studied in art history. All this material is mounted outside each third-grade classroom in the hallway gallery and stays up for the entire month of March. This is the time for parent-teacher conferences, enabling all the parents to see the art show for more time than an opening reception.

The exhibition features paintings, drawings, prints, collages, fiber art, weaving, masks, sculpture, and puppets presented on the walls, tables, and a glass case in the hallway gallery. Douglas sends a letter to each teacher in the school encouraging an "in-school field trip," in which other classes can view and respond to the exhibition. Most teachers in the school walk their students through the exhibition. Some teachers create graphic organizers to help younger students view the show in a more focused manner. Some invite students to choose their favorite piece and describe it. Many create a letter-writing experience, asking students to write a fan letter to one of the artists using a graphic organizer. Often the artists write back to their fans.

According to Douglas, "The school-wide gallery visits create excitement in a number of directions: the artists see crowds admiring their work, the younger children see the work of their older friends and siblings and begin to anticipate being in the show." Teachers report that the children wrote well when they chose a piece that connected to them. The letter exchanges built an awareness of the decisions that go into making an artwork and the multiple responses viewers can have. The student art show created a shared experience for the whole school community.

"A choice-based exhibition is easier for me, and by focusing our collective efforts, it is more meaningful to the school community," says Douglas. "Because the children are showing the work of their choice, they are incredibly invested in the show. The show proved to be a motivator for many students who worked extra hard to finish in time. I also got to know the students better, more intimately, through their artist statements. I noticed a different quality to our eye contact even when we passed in the hallway."

For those viewing the show, the photographs and artist's statements were "speed bumps," causing them to look more carefully at all the work and often to marvel at the depth of thought displayed in the visual art and the written statement. Parents commented on how much more confident their child has become as a result of the class and show. The elements of choice, reflection, response, and community have made this project a success year after year.

## **Demographics**

The Central School in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts is the only elementary school in a small suburban town south of Boston. The student population has varied over the years from 960 to a current population of about 700 students.

The Central School consists of a preschool class, 10 kindergarten classes, 10 first-grade, 8 second-grade, and 9 third-grade classes. The art program serves children in grades 1-3. Each of the

27 classes comes to the art room for 40 minutes per week. Class size averages 25.

Ethnic composition of students in the school system is

- Asian American 0.5%
- African American 1.6%
- Hispanic 0.5%
- Native American 0.1%
- White 97.3%

Families in East Bridgewater have a median household income of \$42,614.

Five percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

No students are receiving ESL services.

Students who receive special education services are 11.1% of the student population.

## **Background**

### **Design & Implementation**

The project incorporates student choice in every phase of its design and implementation.

- Throughout the year, students choose both subject matter and media studied in class.
- The content of the show represents the choice of the individual student artists.
- Students are given the opportunity to explain their thoughts and working process in written artist's statements.
- Members of the school community have the opportunity to view the show in depth and respond to the artwork of their choice.

Implementation Steps:

1. At the beginning of the year, send a letter to each grade 3 teacher to ensure that the hallway gallery will be empty for the installation.
2. Encourage students to leave work in the designated box all year long.
3. Photograph students creating artwork.
4. In January invite students to bring back artwork that was taken home.
5. Sort the work by class and lay it out so students can choose what to show.
6. Touch base with students who have not selected work to make sure that they do not wish to participate in the show.
7. Transcribe their artist's statements.
8. Attach the artist's statements to the artwork.
9. Mount the selected artwork simply—stapled to construction paper.
10. Hang the exhibition on a Saturday morning (an average of 400 pieces).
11. Send a letter home to the parents describing the show.
12. Invite all teachers to make "in-school field trips" in which their students can view the exhibition and respond.
13. Designate a gallery manager for each classroom to check the work every morning and tape up fallen pieces.
14. Make sure that at the end of the month the gallery managers take down the work and return it

to their classmates.

## Results

The annual Grade 3 art show at the Central Elementary School in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts incorporates the following elements:

- self-selected student work for exhibition
- art work accompanied by artist statements in which students reflect on their creative process or explain the work
- students serving as gallery assistants to help the teacher organize, hang, and disassemble the show
- viewing by other students in the school who each select a favorite work and write to the artist to express their thoughts about the piece selected
- viewing by family, friends, and townspeople

A number of results are noted by Katherine Douglas, the school's art teacher.

1. Students who self-selected and exhibited their work in the Central School art show experienced feedback from family, friends, and other students. Many parents commented that they viewed their children's work with more respect after seeing it displayed with the artist statements. Students told me that they were very excited to receive written comments from children in other classrooms.
2. The entire school was able to interact with the exhibit and with the artists in a variety of ways, from observation to written interaction with the art works. Teachers reported that students wrote well when describing their favorite piece of art work in the show.
3. Parents, teachers, and other members of the community were given the "big picture" of the breadth and depth of the school's art program. The town's local arts council viewed the school show and invited students to exhibit their work in the annual Art on the Common show, along with juried adult work. This additional exhibition experience added to the sense of pride in accomplishment that students and their families felt.
4. The teacher was able to manage a large show due to the ownership and participation of the student artists. Student "gallery assistants" showed their pride in their jobs and expressed disappointment when it was time for the show to be taken down.
5. Younger students learned from the work of their older peers and were motivated to be a part of the show in the future. First and second grade students said that they were inspired and influenced by the work of older students.
6. The show proved to be a motivator for some students who became very focused as the show grew closer.
7. A number of students who were struggling with academic or behavior issues in their regular classrooms were "superstars" of the show, producing very exciting work. The show provided another arena for these students to show excellence and capability.
8. The show was a highlight for some of the cooperative groups which function organically in the art room. Students who had worked on similar pieces together over time could create a larger display at the show. For instance, a group of students initiated and formed an Egypt Club as part of their interaction in the art room. They made paintings, drawings, masks, and sculptures on that topic, unrelated to anything required in school. They arranged a long table with all of their work for the show, and it was a real hit with the attendees.

Katherine Douglas comments, "My relationship with the students is always changed and improved as we prepared for and during the show. The artist statements help me to know the children on a more personal level, and the students find that I mean what I say throughout the year — they CAN choose

the work to display and are in charge of their own learning."

### **Replication Details**

The first important step is to work with the assumption that students have a lot to say visually. The students will get the message that the teacher respects them as artists. During class, it is essential to observe student work carefully to identify those needs that require subsequent individual or group instruction. While teaching, be responsive to the "teachable moment" by highlighting the unexpected and wonderful things that emerge from the independent work.

Following are some tips about how to manage the classroom, develop the curriculum, meet educational standards, and create the art show.

1. Arrange the classroom so that a broad range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional wet and dry media are available in an organized fashion each week.
2. Provide instruction so that students can find materials, use them properly, and put them away carefully.
3. Limit whole class instruction so that students have adequate time on chosen tasks.
4. Make indirect instruction constantly available (signage, menus, peer teaching, teacher/student coaching.)
5. Balance instruction in various media: painting, drawing, printmaking, collage, sculpture, and fiber.
6. Consider the big ideas (symbolism, transformation, variation, imagination, invention) that underlie all instruction.
7. Align the program with state and national standards (Massachusetts Visual Arts Curriculum Frameworks and the National Visual Arts Standards.)

### **Costs and Funding**

#### **Contact Information**

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107 Central Street  
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Email: twoducks@aol.com

### **Rating Criteria**

The Central School art program has been a successful choice-based studio program for primary aged students for over 25 years. This program is fully aligned with the Massachusetts Visual Arts Frameworks K-4 and the National Visual Arts Standards. The concept of choice-based teaching has been disseminated at local, regional, and national art education conferences and has been the subject of courses and workshops at Massachusetts College of Art, the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, and Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts.

The Central School story is an exemplar of the best-practice content found in the Teaching for Artistic Behavior spotlight, which was created with the support of The Northeast & Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University and the Massachusetts College of Art (MassArt). Content was synthesized and articulated through a course offered by MassArt in the summer of 2002,

which brought together a group of students and art-education practitioners, many with up to 30 years of successful teaching experience applying the "Teaching for Artistic Behavior" concept in public school classrooms.

### **Educator Biography**

Katherine Douglas has been an elementary school art teacher in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts since 1972. She has a B.S. in Education from the University of Maryland and a Master's Degree in Integrated Studies from Cambridge College. She has studied with Dr. Peter London in the Drawing From Within Institute and at the Massachusetts College of Art Artist/Teacher Institute.

Douglas is collaborating with a group of artists and educators to further develop and disseminate the Teaching for Artistic Behavior concept, which provides instruction in the context of visual arts work chosen by students. She is a visiting lecturer at the Massachusetts College of Art and is an instructor at Stonehill College in Easton, Mass. She has collaborated in international online educational projects using technology to connect teachers and students.

Douglas is a practicing artist who works in watercolor and pencil and has recently exhibited at the Herring Run Arts Festival and several shows in East Bridgewater, Mass.

### **This story exemplifies the following practices:**

**ASSESSMENT** — Choice-based art education utilizes multiple forms of assessment to support student and teacher growth.

# Diane Jaquith's K-5 Art Class, Burr School

## Diane Jaquith's K-5 Art Class, Burr School

Newton, MA

**School Type:** Public

**School  
Setting:** Suburban

**Level:** Elementary

**School  
Design:** Traditional

**Content Presented By:**

Teaching for Artistic Behavior  
Partnership



The third graders appear at the door to the art room and quietly enter. They arrange themselves in a large circle on the floor and exchange greetings with their art teacher, Diane Jaquith. Though anxious to get to work, the children are attentive, knowing this meeting will not be long. A group of student paintings is spread out on the floor, and the class is asked to find examples of "contrast" in the artwork. The discussion expands to clay, fibers, and sculpture, and a list is generated to encourage variation within the artists' work. Soon, the artists leave the meeting area to work at studios spread around the room. They will return in 45 minutes to share their work and discoveries.

"From a teacher's perspective, transitions can have enormous impact on the success of a class. For some students, moving from their classroom to other spaces in the school can be stressful. Others have difficulty leaving the art room. An important part of my job is to make these transitions as smooth as possible for everyone," says Jaquith. Consistency is the key element that enables students to embrace new routines. Children appreciate the predictability, especially when they only have art class once a week.

The change from a traditional art room to choice-based art centers did not happen overnight. First Jaquith set up the centers with various materials and instructions, but there was no central meeting area. Seated at tables, students would play with the art materials while Jaquith was delivering instruction. Because this failed to reach everyone spread out across the art room, Jaquith decided to design a meeting area that could fit an entire class in a circle. A large classroom made this task easy; she rearranged studio centers along the room periphery, leaving an open central space. Set in front of the white board, the meeting area has become the place to assemble at the beginning and end of each class, and has provided additional open workspace during studio time.

Every August, Jaquith cruises the hallways of her school, hoping to find furniture that is discarded by other classroom teachers. Each year, she adds a few pieces to the room to make it more functional for choice-based learning. The first addition to the meeting area was a low bookcase filled with children's books, games, and resource materials. A large, moveable bulletin board fit behind the bookcase, making a room divider. A circular easel appeared at the front of the meeting area to display items of current interest. Subsequent years have brought a rug; shelving to hold work going home; cubbies for general-use tools (such as scissors, markers, pencils, paper punches); and storage for work-in-progress.

Students enter the room and immediately form a circle on the rug. Jaquith carefully observes how the class enters to determine their energy level. After informal greetings, the meeting begins, focusing on a single objective. Often, Jaquith demonstrates new art materials and processes. Concepts, such as "contrast," are presented with examples in various media, which can be incorporated into students' art making. Resources and ideas for art content are reviewed by discussing artwork and books. The group builds aesthetic experiences by viewing artwork and discussing it using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). On occasion, Jaquith uses this time for student assessments of the centers and determining future directions. The meeting lasts between 5 and 10 minutes, depending upon the grade level and activity. When the group activity is over, student artists are invited to go to the center of their choice.

For all grades except kindergarten, art classes run for one hour (kindergarten has shorter classes). Students work at centers for 40 to 45 minutes. Five basic centers are always available: drawing, painting, 3-D construction, clay, and fiber arts. Additional centers appear for shorter periods throughout the year. "I find it overwhelming to manage many centers," Jaquith admits, "so we operate five basic student-run centers. Students have been able to create almost anything they wish by utilizing the basic centers. Because the centers are student-run, I have the time to get out specialized materials for students who need them."

Time for artists to talk about their work is reserved for the very end of class, again in a meeting format. "Self-assessment by sharing artwork is a vital piece of artistic learning," according to Jaquith. "By talking about what they know and can do, artists develop confidence to accept new challenges. Our students get very excited about this part of the class and their enthusiasm makes cleanup time more efficient."

Cleanup is a very difficult time for some student artists, and it can be extremely stressful for art teachers. Having clear routines in place makes cleanup run smoothly. Jaquith begins reminders 10 minutes prior to cleanup time, encouraging children, "You still have a lot of time to work. Make one goal for yourself to accomplish in the remaining 10 minutes." With the 5-minute warning, students know they need to write their name on their work. No new centers can be started at this point. Students will bring their work to the take-home shelves or work-in-progress box in the meeting area and then clean their centers. When an artist needs just a few more minutes, he or she will request extra time. If the work can clearly be finished in that time, the child may complete his or her work or save it in the work-in-progress box for the next class. Clay in-progress is wrapped in damp paper towels and plastic, with the child's name and class written clearly on the plastic. Large constructions are stored on shelves in the 3-D construction center. Students who have completed their cleanup can play a game or look at books while waiting for their classmates to finish their tasks. Sharing time is a highly valued experience for students and works as an incentive to cleanup quickly.

When the class has assembled on the rug with their artwork, sharing begins. Jaquith invites artists to show their work. If a small number of children wish to share, they are each given time to talk about their work and answer questions from classmates. Collaborative groups enjoy using this forum to talk about the development of their ideas and how they worked together. When many students have work to share, Jaquith will invite artists from different centers to stand as a group and display their work. "Painters, please stand up and show us your paintings." On days when no one offers to share, Jaquith may lead with questions, such as "Who got an idea from the materials today?" or "Who can show us contrast in their artwork?" or "Who learned something from another artist today?"

Gathered together, students and teacher form a community of artists, focusing on personal and classmates' achievements. Reflections of the day's work serve as assessment for both teacher and learners. Classroom teachers arriving to pick up their class enjoy listening during this time, gaining insights into their students. When sharing time is completed, students calmly line up to return to their

classroom, proudly carrying their work at their sides.

## **Demographics**

### **Background**

Art teacher Diane Jaquith faced several initial challenges in implementing choice-based learning. Although she had set up multiple learning centers, the beginning and end of class lacked consistency and coherence. Students wanted to get right to work, but were lacking important information about materials and concepts. Jaquith was concerned that district outcomes were not being met because basic information was not being integrated into the centers. Setting a meeting time to cover this material enabled both students and teacher to feel more confident about their purpose in the art class. Lacking consistency at the end of class had caused cleanup time to be hurried and frenzied. But, creating a sharing time at the end of class provided students with a motivation to efficiently put their centers in order.

### **Design & Implementation**

Knowing that she wanted to offer choice, but not knowing where to start, art teacher Diane Jaquith continued to manage a traditional art room for several years. Upon moving to a new district, Jaquith met a colleague with a choice-based art room. For two days, she observed Pauline Joseph's classes. Seeing the program in practice enabled her to make some decisions about centers and room arrangement.

Early on, she offered centers to several of the better-behaved classes. She noticed that younger students were able to make the transition to choice more easily than older students. Choice was offered in limited capacity to all classes as they completed their teacher-assigned work. Jaquith observed the quality of their work time and how students interacted and managed time.

Initially, classes began with students seated at tables. Noticing that more structure was necessary, she determined that meeting together away from the art materials would serve that purpose. In the following year, the meeting area was designed with furniture arranged to accommodate and support student learning. As Jaquith noticed difficulties around cleanup time, she began to offer sharing time. Students would sign up on the white board if they wanted to share their work at the end of class. With more and more students wanting sharing time, Jaquith eliminated the sign-up, inviting all to share spontaneously. An area was designated for work-in-progress and completed work, so students could make the transition from working time to cleanup time. After two years, students had totally embraced the new routines and followed them without prompts.

### **Results**

When students know the routine and expectations set by meeting times, they are good listeners and offer strong insights. While meeting, they are making internal decisions about their work agenda for the day. At the end of class, students make good decisions about their artwork, determining whether it is completed or needing to go into the work-in-progress box. In addition, classroom teachers appreciate collecting their class in a calm and orderly manner as they line up from the sharing time to proceed to the next class.

### **Replication Details**

1. Determine how you will use meeting times. If you do not have space for a separate meeting

area, establish how students will enter the room and seat themselves quickly. If you are on a cart, the classroom may have a meeting area already, or it may be easier for children to remain in their seats. Do you need a table or can you work on the floor? Will you write on a board or easel? Search for the materials you need well ahead of time.

2. Establish routines at the beginning of the year and then stick to them. Consistency is the key to making meeting times efficient. Children work best when there is a plan that remains the same. Write out the routines and display them.
3. Be patient. Don't expect that all children will pick up the routines immediately. Some will adapt within weeks, others may not remember throughout the year, especially when they only come to art class once a week. Gentle verbal reminders and signs will help get the message out.
4. Think carefully about how you will use the group instruction time. As you prepare for each class, think back to the week prior, and see if you can expand on any events of the previous class. Some of the best instruction flows from discoveries made by students. Use this whenever possible during group meeting times, or, if more appropriate, for small group instruction at the centers.
5. Use pre-alerts and reminders to make that additional teaching time more effective. If you know the meeting time will be longer than usual, inform students ahead of time.
6. Be aware of the expectations that your state and district may have for standards and outcomes. Determine what can be covered during initial meeting times, and what can be integrated into the centers. Be realistic about what you can accomplish in 10 minutes' time.
7. Know that some children are not going to manage cleanup time easily. Work with them to discover ways to facilitate completion of their work. Give them special tasks that they enjoy. Be firm but understanding.
8. Take notes while children are sharing. These are the stories that become artist's statements later on in exhibitions. Artist's statements are compelling evidence of knowledge and the best advocacy tool to convince classroom teachers, administrators, and parents that choice-based art education is effective learning.
9. Inform parents about the program and invite them to come visit.
10. Make meeting times a solid bonding experience for the teacher and students. This is your opportunity to relate to the whole class — make it a very positive experience for all.

Note: If you are interested in pursuing the Visual Thinking Strategies, the curriculum is available through Crystal Resources. You can visit the VTS website at <http://www.vue.org>.

## **Costs and Funding**

## **Contact Information**

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Burr Elementary School  
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Newton, MA Phone/Fax: 617-552-7364  
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## **Rating Criteria**

"Teaching for Artistic Behavior" is an emergent concept of teaching practiced successfully in a variety of classrooms for over 25 years. Research and teaching about authentic learning through choice in the visual arts has taken place in a variety of settings including public elementary school classrooms and the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. The concept of choice-based teaching in

art has been disseminated in courses at Massachusetts College of Art, the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, and Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, as well as local, regional, and national art education conferences.

The content for this spotlight was created with the support of the The Northeast & Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University and the Massachusetts College of Art. Content was synthesized and articulated through a course that brought together students and current practitioners with up to 25 years of success in using the teaching for artistic behavior concept.

### **Educator Biography**

Diane Jaquith is an art teacher at The Burr School, a public elementary school in Newton, Massachusetts. She has managed a choice-based art room for six years. She has a B.A. in Fine Art from Bates College in Maine and a M.S.A.E. degree from the Massachusetts College of Art. She has been teaching to all ages for 20 years. Prior to entering the field of education, she was an illustrator and graphic designer.

### **This story exemplifies the following practices:**

**CLASSROOM CONTEXT** — Choice-based art education provides resources and opportunities to construct knowledge and meaning in the process of making art.

# Cabot Elementary School, Pauline Joseph's K–5 Art Class

## Cabot Elementary School, Pauline Joseph's K–5 Art Class

Newton, MA

**School Type:** Public

**School**

**Setting:** Suburban

**Level:** Elementary

**School**

**Design:** Traditional

**Content Presented By:**

Teaching for Artistic Behavior  
Partnership



While on a short medical leave, Pauline Joseph recalled receiving get-well cards from students and realizing that the cards they created were their real artwork. She explains, "The projects that I had had them making were extensions of my work as the teacher and creator of the lesson, not their own voices. I began thinking, 'How can the student be the informer of the work, and the teacher supporter of the student'" Joseph believes, "When teachers write traditional lessons and teach close-ended projects, the students, trapped in the role of apprentice, don't get a chance to be artists."

Pursuing an interest in the views of Open Education, Joseph found a position in a Newton, Massachusetts elementary school. The principal, Roland Barth, had authored *Open Education in the American School*. Barth knew how to structure an open classroom. Joseph acknowledges his influence, "He helped me figure out ways of using the room as an Open Education-based art center. I called the art room a Visual Resource Studio."

Once she had planned her Visual Resource Studio, she and an enthusiastic student teacher transformed the art room one weekend. They rearranged furniture and created centers for neatly organized and labeled supplies. Each center included illustrative materials, references, and visual reproductions. A list of art vocabulary words adorned the doors of a cabinet.

Students arrived on Monday and found the Visual Resource Studio set up with seven centers: drawing, painting, simple printmaking, clay, construction and design, fiber arts, and digital art. Joseph introduced her students to the centers. "With each class that first week, I began by exploring the drawing center and the materials found there. The next week I introduced the painting center, and students could choose to draw or paint. Within several weeks, the entire room was filled with student choice driving the use of the centers." (Joseph has continued to introduce the centers one at a time to her kindergarten students each September.)

Students listened to the new information Joseph presented before they started working. She used a variety of methods including direct teaching, filmstrips, and slides. The amount of instruction time varied from 5 minutes up to 20 minutes when showing a filmstrip to older students. Joseph taught the basic things that artists do – the connections they make, the materials they use, and how they explore ideas and techniques. Whenever a student did anything visually reminiscent of another culture or artist, Joseph capitalized on it. She quickly pulled out reproduction books to help students make direct

connections to their work. As she showed the related work, other students would often stop and listen, even wandering over from other areas.

Joseph ensured that students leaving the fifth-grade had experienced a broad range of art experiences and knew the contents specified in Newton's curriculum guidelines. The same standards and content areas (including aesthetics, techniques, skills, vocabulary, art history, knowledge of other artists and cultures, etc.) that any traditional lesson covered were embedded in each center. The differences were in how the students were allowed to explore those standards and how the standards were implemented.

The results were dramatic. Students were engaged when working on projects that they had chosen. Students worked at their own pace, format, and scope (some preferred individual pieces, others worked in series). Some students tried one thing once then worked on another five or six times until they became a mini-expert in that area. Joseph helped students find their artistic voice and asked them to think critically about what they were doing with it. She explains, "It's not good enough to find their vision, it's important to reflect upon it, understand what other artists have done in that arena, then think about where you want to go with it."

A vast collection of books, suitable for different ages, were another important resource. The classroom housed storybooks about artists, books about art concepts (such as shape, line, movement, or rhythm), and books that highlighted artistic expression in other cultures. "At the end of kindergarten art classes, I read to students. If they wanted to see, they could come to the reading area; others could continue to work quietly. I even talked about the quality of the illustrations in books."

Each year one or two "traditional lessons" showed other ways artists experience new knowledge and techniques. She compared the process to "an artist going to a museum, copying someone else's painting, learning from it, and taking that information to their studio to inform their own activities." She presented the traditional lessons as another resource, "not the only way or the best way to make art, but another resource to inform each student's own art making."

Even within her traditional art lessons, Joseph's students always had real choices to make. In second grade when students were developmentally ready, she presented a "must do" narrative drawing lesson. "A narrative drawing, like a good piece of writing, must be fully investigated. Just as students describe their house in detail in a writing workshop, it should be drawn with the same attention to detail. They wouldn't write, "My house is a brown square with a red triangle and a little black rectangle on top out of which comes smoke." I revisit the ways of giving a picture depth, talk about attention to detail, and ask them to truly explore their narrative drawing. Students draw the subject of their choice and must decide on a setting (urban, indoors, jungle, or space). They choose if it is true, remembered, or purely imaginative."

When students expressed interest, Joseph created "ephemeral centers," each of which was up only a few weeks each year. These weren't permanent centers since they were either messy (papier mache, sand casting, plaster casting, etc.), required direct supervision (linoleum block printing), or used expensive or limited materials. While other students worked independently in the permanent centers, Joseph focused on the ephemeral activities. Space also drove the creation of ephemeral centers. Lacking room for permanent puppet making and bookmaking centers, these activities began first in ephemeral centers, then later when the ephemeral centers closed, students could choose to continue their exploration. The materials were still available in other centers, just not organized into one.

Over time, students in a choice-based environment experienced concepts and materials many times, thereby reinforcing student understanding and building skills. For example, within the thread of

printmaking, students practiced various levels of monoprinting techniques in kindergarten, first, and second grades by working in choice-based centers. In third grade, a traditional lesson guided all students to print a foam block relief using brayers and ink. In fourth grade, students could print foam block relief variations through independent work in centers. In fifth grade, students could choose to pursue linoleum block printmaking in an ephemeral center.

For Pauline Joseph, it was most important that students "experience the true work of the artist: get an idea, choose the material, and make it; or explore materials they find interesting. A third grade student told me, 'I really am a non-objective and abstract artist, and I like working symmetrically.' I never had students speak with that insight about their own style in my other ways of teaching. Students would talk about things they learned, but never this insight about personal style. The longer I taught this way, it made more sense than I could ever have imagined."

### **Demographics**

- The Cabot School is located in Newton, Massachusetts, a suburb approximately 10 miles from Boston.
- The Cabot School has a total of 364 students.
- Class sizes range from 17–27 (with an aid for larger classes) and average 20–21 students.
- Art room schedule: eighteen one-hour classes per week.
- Professional development opportunities: Tuesday is an early release day for students, providing teachers with professional development time. On Thursday afternoons, Newton schedules a rotating program that provides professional development and planning time to teachers and specialists (music, art, gym, and library).

### **Background**

In the 1970s, Pauline Joseph realized that the art lessons and projects she created for her elementary art students did not elicit their real artwork. At the time, in her art room, as in most traditional art classrooms, the students played the role of apprentices. Traditional lesson plans presented the teacher's ideas in lecture form, asked students to create within the parameters of the lesson, used pre-selected prepared materials, and often had a pre-determined outcome. Unconvinced by the results, she began meeting with other non-traditional educators (all of whom taught general classes, not art) and discussing the British Infant Schools, Open Education in America, Piaget, and other influential models. After many conversations, much deliberation, and 10 years of direct teaching experience, she decided to develop an environment that supported her students as artists.

Calling it a Visual Resources Studio, she strove to create a classroom atmosphere that fostered a partnership with her students and allowed them to make the choices and decisions just as artists do. Teaching a choice-based art education model for 30 years, Joseph has reached her goal to provide the resources, time, environment, and guidance for students to seek out their own vision while meeting the standards and curriculum needs of the administration and the community. She stated, "When matched with all those factors, art education really works."

### **Design & Implementation**

With the support of her principal, art teacher Pauline Joseph converted her art room (22' x 32') into a Visual Resources Studio, as she has named it. She grouped the existing furniture into centers for drawing, painting, simple printmaking, clay, fiber arts, computer, and construction and design (including collage). Each center displayed indirect teaching materials (visuals and resources), exemplars, and neatly organized, easily accessible materials. The centers provided students with a

wide range of art experiences (2D and 3D), while fulfilling curriculum requirements for Newton, Mass.

Each day, the student artists would arrive in the art room, ready to execute their ideas, independently gather their materials, set up their workspaces, and get to work. Freed from presenting a long, traditional lesson and the ensuing distribution of supplies, Joseph would help students make connections between their personal work and the art and artists of the world. She would check on each student's progress and provide guidance as needed. Near the end of class, students would be responsible for their own cleanup, again, enabling Joseph more individual student contact. Since Joseph transformed her classroom into a Visual Resources Studio, she has not changed many aspects of the physical arrangement of her classroom. She has, however, expended great energy interacting with her art students and helping them flourish every year.

## Results

- For art teacher Pauline Joseph, the greatest outcome happened when students looked at their finished work. "They know that they own it. It isn't something they had to share with me in creating. My students are familiar with the true feelings that an artist experiences during the various stages of creation."
- Common behavior issues decreased because students chose their work and were fully engaged. "If students act out, it isn't because they don't want to do my lesson. They are less nervous and anxious about meeting my goals, they are more concerned about meeting their own goals."
- Students learned how to be lifelong learners and self-starters. Joseph noted, "If I need another teacher to watch the class for a few minutes, they are amazed that students know what to do. The students walk in, get their materials, and get to work."
- With the independence of choice came the responsibility of cleanup. Because students took out their materials, they knew where they came from and how to put them back. Joseph was freed from traditional teacher duties of material distribution and collection for each class. Between classes she checked supplies and restocked items as needed.
- Joseph enjoyed more quality time with each student. Students worked either independently or in small groups on their own art projects. Joseph didn't have to make sure everyone is doing her task; rather, she could look for children who might need her help focusing on their task.
- Students started speaking about their artwork differently. Students referred to visuals and resources in each center and asked "mini-experts" for assistance. Joseph recalled a third-grade student telling her, "I really am a non-objective and abstract artist and I like working symmetrically." She never had had students speak with that insight about their own style in her other ways of teaching. "Students would talk about things they learned, but never this insight about personal style."
- Joseph loved the fact that she didn't need vast amounts of any materials or tools. Since students are engaged with many different materials at once, they have never needed 25 pairs of scissors, or any other tools, at any time. Most materials never had to be packed away.
- Students, and their parents, learned which art materials they wanted to work with to pursue their art making at home. At holiday time, parents often asked Joseph to recommend materials so their child could continue.

## Replication Details

- Using furniture (tables, chairs, bookshelves, etc.) create small areas (mini-artist studios or centers).
- Some areas accommodate more students than others. (For example, Joseph only needed one

computer, a printer was helpful but not necessary. A drafting table seated one student, while the drawing center accommodated six.)

- Consider your supplies, curriculum standards, and the needs and interests of your students when deciding which centers to offer.
- Centers should offer a range of 2D and 3D experiences.
- Centers can include any of the following or more:
  - drawing
  - painting
  - printmaking
  - 3D sculpture
  - fiber arts
  - digital art
  - clay sculpture
  - architecture
  - mask making
  - puppet making
  - bookmaking
- Start with a few carefully thought-out centers and expand when ready.
- In addition to a workspace and seating, each center should include:
  - Enough materials to satisfy the needs of students working simultaneously and to support a few classes in a row and thereby minimize restocking between classes.
  - Examples of how other artists (including student artists) use these materials
  - Space and containers for all the materials to easily be put away
  - Resources such as books, posters, and other art reproductions
  - Visuals illustrating pertinent information, such as:
    - ◆ – directions for safe use (as necessary)
    - ◆ – associated vocabulary words, concepts, and connections
    - ◆ – set up and cleanup steps (a necessity for painting)
- When introducing each center, the instruction should be brief (to allow students time to explore the materials) and include:
  - directions for safe use
  - a demonstration of how other artists use these materials (with encouragement for students to make their own discoveries)
  - information about what students will find at the center
  - modeling how the materials should be put away
  - highlighting exemplars and resources available to students in the center
- Changing open spaces in the room allows mainstreamed students (in a wheelchair or using braces) to be fully functional in the room without relying on an adult.
- Support your students' choices, especially in the beginning. Students may not be used to taking such an active role in their learning.
- Refrain from judging when students inevitably ask, "Is this good?" As the artist, they will learn to recognize when they are satisfied with their own work.
- Communicate with staff, parents, and administrators. Joseph has recognized a temptation on the part of adults who don't fully understand this teaching approach to think of the art room as just an art supply store. "They may think that we're just about the materials. Whether

introducing a new center or choice, every presentation and center was embedded with art vocabulary, historical connections, reproductions, and cultural examples like any traditional art lesson." Joseph communicated with staff, parents, and administrators "about the importance of this work and how it goes a giant step further toward empowering the students to be in charge of their learning. You have to educate everyone, not just students."

### **Costs and Funding**

Changing her teaching approach did not require additional funds; she simply spent the money in her budget differently. Instead of supplying 20 students in each class with all the tools and materials to make the same project, she used the money to create learning centers. "I didn't have to buy so many boxes of oil pastels. My students only used a few dozen boxes in a school year." And, she could spend some of her money on what she calls "sexy" things like pipe-cleaners, fur trim, and colored sticks. Offering choice-based centers, she spent the same amount of money, on the same amount of students, teaching for the same amount of minutes as when she taught traditional lessons.

### **Contact Information**

Having recently retired, Pauline Joseph is enjoying a little down time. Questions and comments sent to Renee Brannigan (rbrannig@hotmail.com) will be routed to Joseph in a timely manner.

### **Rating Criteria**

"Teaching for Artistic Behavior" is an emergent concept of teaching practiced successfully in a variety of classrooms for over 25 years. Research and teaching about authentic learning through choice in the visual arts has taken place in a variety of settings including public elementary school classrooms and the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. The concept of choice-based teaching in art has been disseminated in courses at Massachusetts College of Art, the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, and Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, as well as local, regional, and national art education conferences.

The content for this spotlight was created with the support of the The Northeast & Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University and the Massachusetts College of Art. Content was synthesized and articulated through a course that brought together students and current practitioners with up to 25 years of success in using the teaching for artistic behavior concept.

### **Educator Biography**

Pauline Joseph has recently retired after teaching art for 39 years. She was awarded Massachusetts Art Educator of the Year in 2002. For four years she taught a course on Teaching for Artistic Behavior at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, Massachusetts. Prior to teaching elementary art education in Newton, Massachusetts, she taught in Wellesley, Massachusetts for two years; in Rockland, Massachusetts for one year; and in Illinois and Wisconsin for a total of three years.

She holds a bachelor's and master's degrees in fine arts from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In between receiving her degrees, to become certified, she took education courses and completed her student teaching at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Joseph believes that having been trained as a fine artist throughout her coursework for both her bachelor's and master's degrees helped her to come to the concept of what an artist does.

**This story exemplifies the following practices:**

**CLASSROOM CONTEXT** — Choice-based art education provides resources and opportunities to construct knowledge and meaning in the process of making art.

# Choice-Based Private Studio Art Class

## Choice-Based Private Studio Art Class

E. Bridgewater, MA

**School Type:** Private

**School Setting:** Suburban

**Level:** K-12

**School Design:** CSR/Other  
Non-Traditional

**Content Presented By:**

Teaching for Artistic  
Behavior Partnership



Cheryl McCabe began teaching art in a studio classroom in her home a few years ago. Her own path to becoming an artist involved a struggle to set and then reach her artistic goals. From this experience, she knew she wanted to create an art program that connected students with the same sense of personal context in their own creative journey.

McCabe's education in traditional high school and college art courses had been frustrating. She came away from them with negative attitudes about herself as an artist and, as a result, left school and stopped making art. A few years later McCabe returned to art making, but this time she created a self-directed learning program. She came to believe that certain attitudes and behaviors were essential to allowing access to an ongoing creative experience.

Positive attitudes and fair evaluations were the basis of her approach. "I began all evaluations from a positive perspective, seeking anything that I found pleasing. Being positive first kept me from being overwhelmed by negative results. When evaluating my work, I believed that good problem solving would develop if I asked myself practical questions so that practical answers containing solutions were possible. I worked to understand my artwork from as many directions as possible, building my ability to meet my artistic needs more readily with each new piece."

Working alone required McCabe to learn how to solve her own problems effectively. Experimentation made it possible to try new mediums and techniques with the goal of discovering creative directions and choices of materials that excited and inspired further work. This gave a freedom to her pursuits that traditional approaches had not. "I learned by doing. Each piece of art answered questions and raised others. I was excited by my choice of materials, encouraged by my realistic goals and positive attitudes, and reassured by my belief that I could learn."

With her new understanding of how artists grow and stay connected to art making, McCabe felt that her students needed to gain this same strong belief in themselves and their potential for creating art on their own terms. She encouraged students to learn an evaluation process that helped them to better understand themselves, their art, and their goals. Sample questions were: "If the work is pleasing, why?" "If the work is flawed, what is the reason and what might be tried to correct the flaw?" The questions were very specific, and the answers served the needs of the art and the artist.

McCabe explains the results: "Ownership becomes theirs, not mine. The students' decisions are more important than the teacher's because I believe they become artists through authentic decision making. This would not happen if I controlled the evaluations of their work, their ideas about themselves, and

their choices about their art making directions: what materials excite, what subject matter inspires, what style of expression is necessary, or how affective are the results."

McCabe created a choice-based learning environment in which students could choose materials from the array provided in the studio classroom and follow their own goals. However, the weakness in her classroom's arrangement became evident through an experience with a third-grade student. "Heather came to my class through a recommendation from her school art teacher. As a student in a choice-based public school classroom, Heather was able to positively channel her behavior and learning difficulties. Her teacher felt that a choice-based after-school art program would give Heather further positive growth and an increased sense of herself as a person who could be successful."

In each of the art classes Heather attended, McCabe gave a lesson for the day and then students could choose to explore its techniques or other options in the room. For Heather, this caused wildly varied results. If she was excited by the lesson, she could become connected to creativity and be relatively well behaved. If she did not care for the lesson, her ability to choose from the limited available materials or choose a direction to pursue was poor. She then became a behavior problem, interfering with her own work and that of the other students in the classroom. It very soon became evident that choice was the pivotal problem.

"Heather was a painter by choice. Her work was lush, expressive, and often abstract," describes McCabe. While the classroom arrangement provided easy access to most materials, the paints were stored in a hard-to-access area for logistical reasons. And, offering painting required McCabe to bring in water containers from another room. "Because it disrupted the class while I obtained materials and water, I felt I could not offer a free choice of painting," says McCabe. "I also worried that difficulties would be compounded if other students followed Heather and at the last-minute decided to paint, requiring me to carry greater quantities of materials and water to the classroom." Because painting required advanced preparation, she had only been offering this medium as a choice on a planned basis, but this limited Heather's ability to choose what she wanted to learn.

McCabe states, "I had allowed awkward logistical problems to impact the creative needs of a student in my care. This was a very powerful realization for me. I truly believed that freedom to choose was necessary for artists to own their process. I knew this yet still qualified this understanding because my classroom was not arranged to accommodate the needs of true choice. What followed as a result of this experience made me a better facilitator and turned my classroom into a more receptive environment for the unique needs of each student."

Compelled to meet Heather's needs, McCabe investigated the necessary changes and discovered that they were actually fairly simple to make. She set up floor-to-ceiling shelving in the classroom, making all the materials easily accessible. Students could pull out watercolors, acrylic, and tempera paints when they needed them. She kept many buckets of water in the room at all times, so that students could follow their impulses to paint, and she didn't have to disrupt class with last-minute preparations. "The water issue was so simple to solve that I am embarrassed I didn't do this sooner," says McCabe.

As a result of these changes, Heather became less disruptive and more engaged in all the lessons. The teacher-student connection greatly improved. Once restructured, the small classroom formed a new, more functional environment for everyone. The original classroom had been a good working environment that offered some choice, and this would have been good enough for many teachers. However, McCabe believes that "if there is a reasonable solution that increases available materials and opens up access to each artist's choices, it is the responsibility of a teacher to be receptive to

change."

"Learning from our students can be the best way to discover our strengths and weaknesses," reflects McCabe. "Allowing ego to interfere might have made me blame the child's behavior problems and believe that she did not have important information to teach me about art education. Her message was clear: For Heather to be creatively engaged and function as an artist, her choices needed to be met with respect and support. Her special needs, as a child with attention and behavior disorders, did not give me permission to excuse myself for the problems my classroom was creating for her. When her needs as an artist were met, her disorders had less of an impact on her ability to express herself as an artist. This is powerful information that applies, with a greater or lesser degree, to all of us in our pursuit of artistic expression."

McCabe learned from this child artist that changes were needed. Out of respect, she paid attention to what the student had to teach her. The classroom improved, and the artist-artwork connection was greatly enhanced. McCabe states, "This experience will continue to affect my teaching! It solidified the importance of ensuring that I make available a well-structured range of materials for choice, as a means of more effectively meeting the needs of all the artists in my care."

## **Demographics**

### **Background**

- Small-group, private art classes ran once a week for six weeks.
- Classes accommodated students of all ages: adults, teenagers, and children as young as four years old.
- Classes for children and teenagers took place in the afternoon, and for adults and teenagers in the evening.
- Classes met in a private home in a suburban community.

### **Design & Implementation**

In this multi-age art program, the children's classes were established on the same principles as the adults' in that the emphasis was on learning how to be an artist rather than exploring any single medium as the end goal.

There were some procedural and content differences in the classes for children and adults.

- McCabe taught a beginners' watercolor class to adults that offered a foundation in the medium. From there, students could choose to explore other media. They were encouraged to develop their own ideas as soon as possible with support from McCabe.
- In children's classes, McCabe demonstrated new materials and methods at the opening of each class. She reminded students that they might apply the new information demonstrated or follow another direction and use materials of their choice. Students were encouraged to experiment with materials in ways that interested them.

In both types of classes, the aim was to make students aware of as many avenues of expression as possible and to support students in attaining their goals.

Demystifying the artist's role was an important objective in McCabe's art program. To do so, she worked with the students at the table, modeling use of materials and creative concepts, while sharing thoughts about her experience. Her goal was to initiate conversations with her students while all were

creating art and to share ideas about what artists do and how they remain connected to art making.

## **Results**

Students learned what it means to be artists. In the process of experimenting, students learned about themselves and gained confidence in their own opinions of what was successful and what was not. As each student developed a sense of ownership of the creative process, they found the freedom to choose materials and experiment with styles. They learned methods that supported greater technical control of a medium, better evaluation skills, and a clearer understanding of how to handle frustrations and disappointments while staying connected to the creative process. This enhanced their ability to choose directions. According to McCabe, "Learning how to become independent self-evaluators, gaining an understanding of what it is that artists need and do, and learning that choices are open to them for greater authenticity of expression were the ultimate goals."

## **Replication Details**

Art teacher Cheryl McCabe learned that any room could be turned into a haven for artists. The physical environment needed only to provide a method for containing materials and a worktable and chairs. Beyond these simple requirements, the most important element was the instructor's belief that all who entered the classroom were already artists. This belief changed the instructor's role from creating artists to supporting artists, a shift in philosophy that involved a responsibility to respect the artist's needs and rights.

As a facilitator, the instructor listened to each artist and worked towards providing information, materials, and a safe environment to freely express ideas and emotions in an authentic manner. In addition, the instructor used evaluation methods that helped create good problem-solving techniques based on the individuality of the student rather than the instructor's subjective critiques and conclusions.

## **Costs and Funding**

Bookshelves, tables, chairs, easels, and any filing or storage system were not covered by fees but considered part of the expense of establishing a classroom.

Material costs were built into the class fees. McCabe used a portion of the class fees each session to add materials, over time making available as many choices as possible. The first classes centered on drawing at a table with additional materials; she added other techniques and goals as finances made them possible. According to McCabe, "It was necessary to create objectives for the environment as well as for instruction."

In contrast to the younger students, adults were given a materials list and generally made additional purchases. They might experiment with classroom materials first to identify their interests.

## **Contact Information**

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## **Rating Criteria**

"Teaching for Artistic Behavior" is an emergent concept of teaching practiced successfully in a variety of classrooms for over 25 years. Research and teaching about authentic learning through choice in the visual arts has taken place in a variety of settings including public elementary school classrooms and the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. The concept of choice-based teaching in art has been disseminated in courses at Massachusetts College of Art, the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, and Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, as well as local, regional, and national art education conferences.

The content for this spotlight was created with the support of the The Northeast & Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University and the Massachusetts College of Art. Content was synthesized and articulated through a course that brought together students and current practitioners with up to 25 years of success in using the teaching for artistic behavior concept.

### **Educator Biography**

Cheryl McCabe is a self-taught artist who has developed methods to keep herself motivated and connected to art making. These methods have been the basis for her teaching. She has experience with many media. Her work has been shown in juried and invitational shows over the years, with sales of her work through the artist and galleries. Her work is in private and public collections.

### **This story exemplifies the following practices:**

**PERSONAL CONTEXT** -- Choice-based art education regards students as artists and offers students real choices for responding to their own ideas and interests through art making.

# John Crowe: A Long Road to Choice

## Burnell Laboratory School

Bridgewater, MA

**School Type:** Public

**School  
Setting:** Suburban

**Level:** K–12

**School  
Design:** Traditional

**Content Presented By:**

Teaching for Artistic Behavior  
Partnership



For art teacher John Crowe, the long road to choice-based art education began with teaching in elementary and high schools, then evolved to a position as professor of art education and hands-on work in schools. It has been an ongoing investigation of how to bring elements of choice to art education.

Crowe was initially trained in the theory and practice of Victor Lowenfeld, who was concerned with the emotional, intellectual, physical, social, and creative growth of children through art experiences led by the teacher. (See Lowenfeld and Brittain's *Creative and Mental Growth, 1967*.) In his first teaching experiences, however, Crowe felt "on stage," conducting Lowenfeld-inspired motivations every 45 minutes for over 2,000 students in seven different elementary schools with no art rooms, no sinks, and no carts. The once-a-month art lessons were exhausting but provided him with enthusiastic applause six times a day, and, he states, "What job offers that?" At the age of 25, he decided to change the pace and context, and he transferred to the high school level where he taught for 11 years. "The luxury of meeting with high school students every day and working on long-term projects led to a more fulfilling teaching experience involving more individualized instruction," he says.

In 1989, Crowe became an assistant professor at Bridgewater State College. One component of his job was developing the art education program for 300 elementary students at the Burnell Laboratory School, which had an affiliation with the college. Reentering the classroom as an elementary school teacher, Crowe had a surprising reaction: "I began by relying on my tried and true Lowenfeldian approach, but it now felt heartbreakingly hollow. I noticed that the results of the lessons were driven by my role as the sole provider of motivation, subject matter, materials, and methods. I felt on stage: My relationship to my students was like a performer to an audience. I really missed the one-on-one dialogues I was able to have with my high school students, and I wondered if I could build those intimate, artist-to-artist relationships with my new elementary school students."

In an effort to connect more to his students, it occurred to him to survey the fifth and sixth graders' interests in preparation for conducting a unit on painting. He asked two questions of the 100 students:

1. If you were able to create a painting about anything, what would you be interested in painting? He asked students to ignore what they felt they couldn't do, maintaining that he would teach them. Sample responses were: something outside, mountains of Vermont, mother and daughter doing something together, a football game, Paradise (Revelation 21: 3,4), a bald

eagle flying, things of cheer, a glass castle.

2. If someone were to ask you to paint something, what would be your least favorite thing/subject to paint? Sample responses were: a boring painting, a fishbowl with no fish, falling off a cliff, Hitler, a well textured animal, a dancer, a picture of someone I know, a one-color painting.

He took the surveys home to organize them; it was easier than he anticipated. The student responses fell into the categories of people, landscapes, objects, and imaginative scenarios. He compiled a list of preferences from each of the four classes and gathered books and resources for the chosen subjects. When he met each class at the art room door, he called out the names of students organized by interest category. Each group was assigned to a large table and asked to look at the material piled in the center. Some students figured out that the resources related to their surveyed interests. After a brief introduction to what he had arranged, he stated, "I want you to follow your interests. Use the resources for inspiration if you wish. I will teach you individually and in small groups what you need to know to paint what you want to paint."

He offered mini-lessons: for example, mixing a variety of skin tones to the figure painting group, the many ways of creating the illusion of distance to the landscape group, the tradition of drawing upon dreams to the imaginative scenarios group. In addition, he honored individual and group requests for instructional topics. Since he provided a wide variety of exemplars, the class had many sophisticated discussions around the definitions of the genres in addition to the 'how to' requests. He reflects on the success: "Teaching became more fulfilling for me, learning more engaging for my students. The resulting artwork was more authentic and varied. My first step toward student choice was modest, yet encouraging. I was off the stage and into the more intimate venues of small groups, organized around their own motivations, not mine."

The substantive discussions around the landscape, figure, still life, and imagination/dreams genres inspired him to revise his curriculum for fifth- and sixth-grade students. "I was thinking about how we teachers try to accommodate different learning styles and wondered how I could concurrently support a variety of art styles. As a start, I decided to adopt the identification and descriptions in Edmund Burke Feldman's *Varieties of Visual Experience* (1972) of four art styles: objective accuracy, formal order, emotion, and fantasy."

The following year, Crowe offered students a choice of these four styles for every assignment. For example, a figure drawing assignment would outline four distinct challenges, each based on a single art style, from which students could choose. "I was working with many student teachers and interns at the time," he reflects. "They found this structure to be helpful in designing lesson plans, looking at an assignment in four different ways. The students clearly appreciated the choices and were intrigued by their classmates' choices -- it was like multiplying the art content by four." (In retrospect, Crowe comments, "If I were to pick up this curriculum structure again, I would use as the foundation Graeme Chalmers' roles of artists, outlined in his book *Celebrating Pluralism: Art Education and Cultural Diversity* -- it would be much more inclusive.")

Meanwhile, he was teaching grades 1-4 in a more conventional manner. Searching for ways to open up, his thoughts returned to the elementary school teaching of an old friend and colleague, Kathy Douglas. He says, "I remembered the energetic spirit of students working in the many centers in Douglas's choice-based classroom: The room was alive with purposeful activity. But I knew couldn't spin all those plates at once, all those 2D and 3D centers, even a clay center with a firing schedule!"

Crowe thought hard over the following summer about how to structure a center-based art room that he could handle. He started with what he wished students would do better. "I was struck by how most

of my students weren't inclined to play with materials or ideas. And, at the same time, they weren't apt to care about any single work beyond the allotted 45 minutes. How could they, within my conventional pedagogical structure?"

As a solution, Crowe developed the themes of PLAY & CARE as the basis of a curriculum framework. Every class brainstormed what 'play' and 'care' meant to them in terms of art work and shared the results. The sharp focus of these age-appropriate themes helped to clearly communicate the goals of program to the most important group, the students.

He posted the following schedule for all his students in grades 1–6 to see:

Term 1: Drawing	PLAY (4 – 5 weeks) & CARE (4 – 5 weeks)
Term 2: Painting	PLAY (4 – 5 weeks) & CARE (4 – 5 weeks)
Term 3: 3D	PLAY (4 – 5 weeks) & CARE (4 – 5 weeks)
Term 4: Student Choice	PLAY (4 – 5 weeks) & CARE (4 – 5 weeks)

Crowe and his college student helpers provided a dozen media and content-area centers designed around the subjects of each term. For example, the drawing centers covered media such as colored pencils, ink and related tools, mechanical drawing instruments, charcoal, and chalk. Centers for content areas included human anatomy and "writing as drawing." There were fewer 3D centers, but they included found object, woodworking, and clay centers. An age-appropriate library with a reading rug was always accessible.

Working in the centers, students conducted PLAY experiments with media and content. Over time, students assembled their experimental artwork into portfolios that provided the basis for reflecting on their artwork and guiding their learning. Crowe asked students to place stars beside their favorite PLAY experiments and file these in the front of their portfolios. Then he had individual discussions with students about their PLAY experiments. Discussions centered on finding a direction to explore for their CARE works, or longer term projects. "With some classes, who seemed skittish about truly playing, I mandated that they make at least 10 mistakes and number these in their portfolios. It was a revelation to some that their 'mistakes' could become some of their favorite PLAY adventures and even lead to a longer term CARE project."

The one-year PLAY & CARE experiment was a huge success. He explains, "It seemed to strike a perfect balance of structure and freedom both for me and my students. So many of my classroom management problems disappeared when students could pace and direct themselves. Students could hop from one center to another in a single session, or work week after week on a major undertaking. But above all, students were required to find their own paths and delighted in the freedom to pursue them. I delighted in teaching individuals and small groups about topics they were motivated to learn. I was free of a prewritten script."

Assessment of PLAY & CARE was a challenge, however. Crowe was required to grade each of his 300 students four times a year. The grading system was as follows:

O = Outstanding  
S = Satisfactory

To align this grading system to his PLAY & CARE centers-based curriculum, he took a creative approach. "I decided to base a grading system on a version of the old 'saw':

*A laborer uses his/her hands.*

*A craftsman uses his/her hands and mind.*

*An artist uses his/her hands, mind, and heart.*

He devised a grading system symbolized by three icons: a small drawing of a pair of hands, a brain, and a heart. The trio of icons were posted in the art room and served as a basis for ongoing assessment discussions. "I talked about behaviors, and I dramatized them to the students' amusement. If a student came into the art room and simply worked, talked to their neighbors about recess and paid no mind to what they were doing, that behavior earned an N grade; if a student thought out a solution to a problem, that behavior earned an S; if a student was totally involved, concentrating, working, and thinking, that behavior earned an O."

At the end of the PLAY & CARE phases, each student received a small self-evaluation slip. Students circled the appropriate icon of hands, mind, heart; older students were asked to add written comments. After students filled the evaluations out, they met with Crowe individually to review their PLAY & CARE portfolios. This could take place during class time because the class expectation was clear: to be engaged artists. As Crowe describes the process, "Students were working in the centers, obtaining the materials they needed, and pursuing their own objectives, while I was free to sit and have a private discussion with each and every student for at least a few minutes over two or three sessions. This was truly gratifying and fun!"

Crowe adds, "Another benefit of this transparent grading system was the clarification of the art grading process for parents. My initial presentation of the system to the Parents' Council was met with enthusiastic support because it helped to demystify grading art. Many parents told me that they had interesting discussions with their children about what the icons of hands, mind, and heart meant. The principal agreed to print the icons on the actual report card — they were quite a sight in the context of all the other words and codes."

From developing engaging assessment methods to choice-based centers to flexible curriculum frameworks, Crowe has developed art education practices that enable him to interact with students as artists and to communicate to parents and administrators about the richness and value of students' authentic artistic behavior.

## **Demographics**

### **Background**

Burnell Laboratory School  
Bridgewater State College  
Bridgewater, Massachusetts

- 300+ students, grades 1–6
- Two classes per grade level
- 25–52 students in a class
- Neighborhood school in a suburban town associated with the local state college

## Design & Implementation

1. Define the mission of your art education program. Art educator John Crowe states, "My mission was to make a dramatic point about artistic behavior. It was my opinion that my students needed to really play and truly care."
2. Figure out a year's schedule. Crowe used his school's four-quarter system to schedule the PLAY & CARE curriculum framework.
3. Determine topics/themes for the schedule. Crowe chose one for each of the four terms: drawing, painting, 3-D, and 'the best of' — full student choice from the previous three terms.
4. Select the content of the centers themselves. Crowe established some media-based centers and some concept-based centers. All centers included appropriate tools, some handouts, and instructions for use and care. In addition, he established a resource center with books, prints, handouts, and a reading area rug.
5. Introduce centers through direct teaching. On the first day, Crowe introduced the essentials of all centers within one 45-minute period. The students even had time to try something the first day. By the second session of each term, all the centers were active.
6. Introduce the curricular themes in a repeated cycle.
  - Crowe established a PLAY period and discussed what was expected in the PLAY portfolios. All the while, students were searching for clues for something they CARE about and would like to investigate further.
  - He brainstormed qualities of PLAY and CARE with students. Discussion of these qualities were part of the one-on-one assessment meetings.
  - He arranged for one-on-one meetings with each student about their PLAY experiences and discussed their thoughts for what they'd like to pursue for their CARE project. He repeated this at the conclusion of the term for the CARE project.
  - He then conducted the PLAY & CARE cycle above for the painting, 3D, and the full student choice terms.

## Results

1. As a result of establishing a choice-based art education program, John Crowe found that he as a teacher had the opportunity to talk with students as one artist to another.
2. The choice-based curriculum structure accommodated many more learning styles and varieties of self-pacing.
3. There was nearly total engagement of students and behavior management problems virtually disappeared.
4. There were no resistant students because the work was self-determined and everyone could find an interesting path.
5. Child development stereotypes started to break down. For example, some first graders became fascinated with anatomy and became experts at anatomical drawing, and sixth graders were able to scribble and experiment with various materials.
6. Students had the opportunity to specialize over time and to develop a style of working or an expertise in a particular topic.
7. It was valuable to see the blossoming of "non-school" content: personal obsessions, religious themes, death of relatives and pets.

8. The teacher's spirit was renewed by the excitement of facing new studio adventures every day. As Crowe says, "After 20 years of teaching, I couldn't wait to get to school because I couldn't predict what was going to happen — no conventional lesson plan of mine predetermined it all."
9. Students were able to meet high standards. "I felt I could hold students more accountable to higher standards than ever before because they chose the work and the direction," says Crowe.

### **Replication Details**

1. Establish goals appropriate for your particular program.
2. Establish a clear framework and a way of communicating it clearly to your students, no matter what their age.
3. Create studio centers to support the goals and framework you have created.
4. Develop clear expectations for artistic behavior.
5. Hold students accountable for the work they have chosen.

### **Costs and Funding**

These art classes functioned well on an average school budget and donations of recycled materials. There were no costs over the budget.

### **Contact Information**

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### **Rating Criteria**

"Teaching for Artistic Behavior" is an emergent concept of teaching practiced successfully in a variety of classrooms for over 25 years. Research and teaching about authentic learning through choice in the visual arts has taken place in a variety of settings including public elementary school classrooms and the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. The concept of choice-based teaching in art has been disseminated in courses at Massachusetts College of Art, the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, and Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, as well as local, regional, and national art education conferences.

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### **Educator Biography**

Dr. John V. Crowe has been an art educator for 31 years, teaching students from kindergarten through graduate school in settings ranging from rural small towns to major cities. His book in progress is *Deschooling Art in Schools*. He was recently named Massachusetts Higher Educator of the Year by

the Massachusetts Art Education Association (MAEA). Along with Kathy Douglas and other art educators, he founded the Teaching for Artistic Behavior Partnership. He is currently the Chairperson of the Art Education Department at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. Crowe is a practicing artist whose teaching has provided rich material for his visual work. His ongoing body of artwork is entitled "Art About Teaching."

**This story exemplifies the following practices:**

**PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT** -- Choice-based art education supports multiple modes of learning and teaching.

**ASSESSMENT** -- Choice-based art education utilizes multiple forms of assessment to support student and teacher growth.

## Freetown–Lakeville Middle School, Lakeville, MA

### Lindsey Harden's 5th–8th Grade Art Class, Freetown–Lakeville Middle School

Lakeville, MA

**School Type:** Public

**School**

**Setting:** Suburban

**Level:** Middle

**School**

**Design:** Traditional

**Content Presented By:**

Teaching for Artistic Behavior  
Partnership



When Lindsey Harden began her teaching career at the Freetown–Lakeville Middle School in Lakeville, Massachusetts, she encountered many of the challenges a first-year teacher faces. In addition, she wanted to introduce a new concept to the school: choice-based art education. Choice-based art education transforms the art room into multiple learning centers where students work independently on art projects of their choice with guidance from the instructor and peers.

First, Harden had to learn about her new working environment. At this suburban middle school, students came from two small neighboring southeastern Massachusetts towns, Freetown and Lakeville. The socio-economic backgrounds varied from upper-working-class to low-income homes, typical of area public schools. The school's philosophies were heavily influenced by the Massachusetts State Frameworks and emphasized a wide variety of academic goals for its 1,000 fifth- to eighth-grade students.

Students in grades 5, 7, and 8 had 50 minutes of art, two days in a row during a six-day cycle. Sixth graders had art once in a cycle. The art department was a team of two teachers, each handling half of the student population for the entire school year. Prior to Harden being hired, the two art teachers had co-taught for many years. Though they shared a large room, it was divided into separate spaces by a partial wall.

"I wondered how the students, teachers, and administration would adjust to my very different attitude toward art instruction. I wondered if the activity and chatter on my side of the art room would disturb the other art teacher," Harden reflected.

She made an effort to communicate clearly with her colleagues about her three main goals: (1) to encourage students to formulate their own ideas for art making; (2) to encourage experimentation with various media; (3) to create a learning environment where all students could be successful.

Fortunately, Harden had enormous support from the new principal, Dr. Jeanne Bonneau, and her colleagues. "Despite our different teaching styles, the other art teacher remained optimistic about my ideas to offer learning centers and choices on my side of the art room," said Harden. "Along with the implementation of learning centers and choice came educating colleagues, parents, and most important, students."

## **Restructuring the Art Room**

When students arrived on the first day of art class, they were shocked to find their once predictable art room transformed. No longer were the tables pushed together in small groups in the center of the room, walls bare, or supplies locked up. Harden's set up dispersed tables throughout the room in clusters, creating learning centers. The year began with bookmaking and drawing centers, soon expanding to centers for painting, sculpture, fiber arts, and costume design. Supplies were out on the tables and ready for use, rather than stored away. The walls were decorated with art and text, allowing plenty of space to display student work.

The first day of class began with introductions. "I told them I was an artist, and they would be treated as an artist in the art room. I asked them to raise their hands if they considered themselves artists. Not surprisingly, I got few responses from the eighth, seventh, even sixth graders. Fifth graders were a bit more confident." In each class, they discussed their perception of what art is and what an artist does.

Harden and the students collaboratively developed art room rules. She stated her expectations and outlined what the new set up was all about. "I told them about the concepts behind centers: Like artists, they would choose the area of the room in which to make their art. I explained that they would be responsible for coming to class with art ideas and a plan for executing them. As I expected, students reacted positively to my enthusiasm about their restructured art room."

## **A New Way of Thinking About Art**

One of the biggest challenges, and one Harden had not anticipated, was helping her students learn in a new way. They were accustomed to being told what to do by their teachers. Now she needed to help them come to class with their own art ideas and initiate their own way of working. Most of the children, especially the older ones, claimed they had "no ideas." Harden helped them generate ideas using several strategies:

- She helped them narrow down large topics.
- She spoke at length with individual students to help them focus on their interests.
- She encouraged writing and sketching in journals.
- She used examples of other student work.

Harden also found that she needed to expand students' ideas of what constitutes 'good art.' She discussed the many forms and styles that contemporary art can take, which includes, but is much broader than, realistic drawing. She introduced less traditional forms such as found-object sculptures, abstract and non-objective works, costume designs, architecture, and design work.

## **Finding Inspiration and Taking Initiative**

One method of helping students generate ideas was putting student work in plain view – in displays and on the works-in-progress table – to inspire others. For example, one eighth grader, Eric, took every opportunity to work in the sculpture center. But, when asked if he considered himself an artist, he said, "No way, I can't draw." Over the course of eight weeks, he constructed an elaborately detailed replica of a fighter jet with craft sticks and hot glue. He worked diligently, retrieving his sculpture from the work-in-progress table and perfecting every detail. Eric's jet soon became a source of inspiration for others, validating his sense of his own artwork. "I noticed an increasing interest in jets, airplanes, and rockets among students who previously said they had no art ideas," said Harden.

Aircrafts of all types were being constructed from found objects and soon a fleet was hanging from

the art room ceiling for display. This installation inspired Nick, an eighth-grade illustrator, to do a series of drawings based on World War II aircraft. Nick brought in old books about the war and used them as visual references for his illustrations. When the drawing series was complete, he moved on to creating a three-dimensional depiction of a war scene. He used a shallow cardboard box as the surface and built bunkers and barriers with cardboard, craft sticks, and found objects. He even brought in dirt and twigs to make the landscape look realistic. Nick was completely invested in his research of war history as well as his art making.

### **Overcoming Challenges**

To guide the year's progress, Harden paid close attention to her students' interests. "At times, I got frustrated. They only seemed interested in themselves: their friends, clothes, gossip ? middle school stuff." Then, she realized that her students were telling her something about their lives, their interests, and what they needed to be able to express themselves creatively. To tap into this, she introduced other forms of art such as performing arts and costume making.

To the fiber arts center Harden added fabric, thread, and needles for costume making. With available materials and resources, brief demonstrations, and a little encouragement, students who had had little interest or confidence in anything else found success in designing clothes and costumes. "They would ask to come to art during their study period. That's when I knew I was doing something right," said Harden.

When working with her students, Harden often noticed that the fear of making mistakes inhibited them. Because it was important that students experimented with unfamiliar media and concepts, she discussed and applauded artist's work habits such as sketching, doodling, and playing.

Another strategy for helping students get past the fear of failure was assessing the working process as well as the final product. She praised mistakes that were evidence of risk taking and setting difficult challenges. Self-assessment became part of classroom routine; students discussed their process, their problems, solutions, and what they had learned. She also encouraged students to make journals or sketchbooks that were entirely private.

### **Integrating Assessment Into Learning**

Assessment procedure was a challenge for this beginning teacher. The Freetown-Lakeville Middle School required Harden to give a letter grade, a conduct grade, and a comment for over 500 students, four times per year. As Harden expressed her dilemma, "The administration wanted to see my assessment method expressed in rubric form. Parents, teachers, and administrators needed 'visual proof' of how I arrived at a student's final grade. But, the emphasis in a choice-based classroom is not solely on product. Letter-grading individual artworks was not an option for my teaching style."

Harden's solution was to base overall term grades on four categories: effort, attitude, craftsmanship, and conduct. She informed students about what was expected of them during their first art class. She kept written accounts of each student's progress throughout the year. This method required a lot of observation and time, but was worthwhile as it became an integrated part of the learning process.

Realizing that their work would not be branded with a letter grade, student anxiety about art making greatly reduced. In Harden's method, students were partly responsible for assessing their own work. They kept portfolios of their work throughout the year: paper portfolios for two-dimensional work and digital portfolios for three-dimensional work. Students completed one or two required assignments per term, usually in their sketchbooks.

Each grading term, students would turn in a written reflection of their progress. They commented on any struggles they encountered, as well as techniques for overcoming them. They wrote about their most successful art experiences and what constituted personal artistic success.

The combination of their self-assessment, the required assignments, and Harden's documentation of their conduct and effort served as the rubric for grading. With this method, student art was never compared to an exemplary piece of 'good art.' All students had the opportunity to be successful.

To inform parents, Harden sent home a newsletter outlining her expectations for students and inviting them to stop by the art room during open house. "A number of parents did stop in to see what the new art room was all about. Some even brought stuff from home that I had requested for the sculpture center. The comments about their children's interest in art were very positive. One mother said, 'Jayna can't stop talking about what she's doing in art? designing clothes!'"

Visitors to the classroom were amazed by the lack of behavior issues, considering the high level of activity. Administrators and colleagues stopped by the art room, their interest piqued by the students' discussions of what they were working on in art. Looking at the displays of student artwork filling the halls and shelves, they commented on the variety of subject matter and originality of the art.

Harden was pleased with the personal and artistic growth that her students showed. Offering choice to students who were unfamiliar with this way of learning required educating students, parents, and administrators about the art-making process and how artists discover their ideas and choose the best materials to express them. When given the opportunity to choose subject matter and media, students were clearly more invested in their artwork and their education.

## **Demographics**

### **Background**

The Freetown-Lakeville Middle School in Lakeville, Massachusetts serves over 1,000 students grades 5-8 in weekly art classes. The student population comes from two small neighboring southeastern Massachusetts towns, Freetown and Lakeville. The students' socio-economic backgrounds vary from upper-working-class to low-income homes.

The school's philosophies are heavily influenced by the Massachusetts State Frameworks and emphasize a wide variety of academic goals. Students in grades 5, 7, and 8 have 50 minutes of art, two days in a row during a six-day cycle. Sixth graders have art once in a cycle. The art department is a team of two teachers, each handling half of the student population for the entire school year. The two art teachers work in a shared art room divided by a partial wall.

After receiving certification in June 2000, Lindsey Harden was hired at the Freetown-Lakeville Middle School in Lakeville, Massachusetts as a new art teacher responsible for working with half of the student population. Her teaching philosophy involves offering students the resources, guidance, and freedom they need to learn about art.

Harden was first introduced to the concept of choice-based art education—and to the idea of becoming a teacher—while an undergraduate at UMass Dartmouth. As a visual design major, Harden elected to take a few art education courses with Professor Peter London.

Harden describes the impact of the experience: "In all of London's courses, he asked students to create, write, and research topics based on what was important to us as artists, students, and

individuals. Most of our class meetings were equal parts thinking, creating, discussing, and reflecting. The way in which he facilitated his classes fascinated me. He often began his classes by asking students to find an area of the room to create in: a mini-studio. He would then offer a somewhat personal, thought-provoking question or statement. Choosing the materials, each student would illustrate his or her interpretation of these remarks. The class would then share and discuss their images.

"During the group sharing, it was obvious that London's objective was not for his students to create nice pictures for him to look at. Emphasis was on the process of creating as a means of self-expression. I discovered that meaningful art could only come from within the individual artist, not solely with the intention of pleasing others. This concept became the core of my philosophy about choice-based art teaching."

London's exemplary teaching inspired Harden to pursue a master's degree in art education. As a graduate student, Harden completed her student teaching in a choice-based elementary art classroom. "Never before had I observed an elementary class where the students were so eager to get to work. The art room was full of activity, energy, and excitement because the students were able to choose their subject matter and materials. At the end of their art time, they couldn't wait to share their work."

Like London, the teacher in this elementary art classroom served as the facilitator of the art room rather than just the instructor. This allowed for a comfortable yet challenging learning environment. The teacher constantly moved about the art room, addressing students' needs, making careful suggestions, or taking interest in a student's work. Consequently, students produced truly meaningful art by constructing their own learning environments.

"I knew immediately that my own art room would be the same," says Harden. "Based on my experiences as an art student and observations of children making art, a choice-based approach was the most appropriate method of art instruction for me."

### **Design & Implementation**

Lindsey Harden approached introducing choice-based art education to her new work environment in the following ways:

1. Established trust with mentor art teacher, principal, staff, and students by clearly articulating ideas for art classroom and developing collaborative 'rules' for the art room built on respect for art and artists.
2. Restructured art room into learning centers, making supplies available and choice possible.
3. Added learning centers based on student interest.
4. Provided instruction and motivation based on student need.
5. Displayed student artwork to inspire others and to communicate to staff and parents about student achievements.
6. Assessed student artwork through multiple means: students' self-assessment and writings, required assignments, portfolios, and displays.
7. Wrote letters to parents and staff inviting them to the open house and articulating the concept behind the choice-based art class.

### **Results**

In Lindsey Harden's choice-based art education classroom:

1. Students developed a greater respect for the artistic differences among their peers.
2. Students began to see art as more than just pretty pictures. They deepened their appreciation for meaning in art.
3. Student work became more personal, as students became invested in chosen work that interested them instead of just producing work for a grade.
4. Students came to class with ideas for their art making.
5. Students were able to continue at length on works already in progress.
6. Students asked to come to the art room during their free time to complete work.

### **Replication Details**

Lindsey Harden offers the following hints to first-year teachers of choice-based art education:

1. Be open to straying from an original plan. See what is working and what is not. Notice where students seem to be taking an idea and be willing to go with that.
2. Pay attention to what the students are telling you both directly or indirectly. What does each student need in order to make the art experience as valuable as possible?
3. Practice what you preach and be ready to model. Show examples of your own sketchbook, your own doodles, experiments, and mistakes.
4. Especially for first-year teachers:
  - ◆ Only take on as much as you can handle—say 'No,' sometimes.
  - ◆ Remind yourself why you chose to be an art teacher, what you are trying to accomplish in the art room, and what sort of atmosphere you are trying to maintain.
  - ◆ Remember that even your job is a work in progress. Don't expect to get it all right the first year. Give yourself permission to make plenty of mistakes!

### **Costs and Funding**

N/A

### **Contact Information**

Lindsey Harden  
Email: lharden12@excite.com

### **Rating Criteria**

"Teaching for Artistic Behavior" is an emergent concept of teaching practiced successfully in a variety of classrooms for over 25 years. Research and teaching about authentic learning through choice in the visual arts has taken place in a variety of settings including public elementary school classrooms and the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. The concept of choice-based teaching in art has been disseminated in courses at Massachusetts College of Art, the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, and Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, as well as local, regional, and national art education conferences.

The content for this spotlight was created with the support of The Northeast & Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University and the Massachusetts College of Art. Content was synthesized and articulated through a course that brought together students and current practitioners with up to 25 years of success in using the teaching for artistic behavior concept.

### **Educator Biography**

Lindsey Harden received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Visual Design from UMass Dartmouth in 1998 and became a certified pre-K – 9 visual art teacher in 2000. As a first-year teacher, she taught choice-based art at the Freetown-Lakeville Middle School in Lakeville, Mass., from 2000 to 2001. She is currently completing her graduate thesis for a Master's of Art Education degree at UMass Dartmouth. Harden is the Assistant Director and Educational Coordinator of the Four Seasons Creative Learning preschool/daycare in West Bridgewater, Massachusetts, opening this September, 2003. Harden assisted in planning this center, whose philosophy includes choice-based teaching.

**This story exemplifies the following practices:**

**PERSONAL CONTEXT** — Choice-based art education regards students as artists and offers students real choices for responding to their own ideas and interests through art making.

**ASSESSMENT** — Choice-based art education utilizes multiple forms of assessment to support student and teacher growth.



# Related Web Resources

This is an annotated list of resources found on other Web sites that relate to this spotlight topic on The Knowledge Loom. We encourage you to access them from the links provided on The Knowledge Loom. To do this, go to the Web address noted in the header. Then click on the Related Resources link.

For an overview of additional content presented on The Knowledge Loom Web site that may not have been selected for this print document, see the Spotlight Overview located earlier in the document.

1) Coming Up Taller Report  
<http://www.cominguptaller.org>

"This report documents arts and humanities programs in communities across America that offer opportunities for children and youth to learn new skills, expand their horizons and develop a sense of self, well-being and belonging."

2) Reggio Emilia Approach  
<http://www.cmu.edu/cyert-center/rea.htm>

This site provides an outline of the major features of the Reggio Emilia approach as well as links to other resources for this teaching concept.

3) Cut + Paste  
<http://www.cutxpaste.net>

Created for art educators, this site is designed to address creative needs, concerns and inspirations. Monthly challenges are issued to teachers. Artist/teachers can exhibit their art work and studio spaces.

4) Helping Students Assess Their Thinking  
<http://www.criticalthinking.org/K12/K12library/helps.nclk>

"There are two essential dimensions of thinking that students need to master in order to learn how to upgrade their thinking. They need to be able to identify the "parts" of their thinking, and they need to be able to assess their use of these parts of thinking." This document, by Richard Paul and Linda Elder of the Center for Critical Thinking, lists guidelines to help students develop reasoning abilities.

5) 44 Benefits of Collaborative Learning by Ted Panitz  
<http://mathforum.org/epigone/cl/testaaa/em6c8z0l8c2c@forum.swarthmore.edu>

A very complete list of benefits observed in classrooms using various forms of collaborative learning.

6) Access Art  
[http://www.accessart.org.uk/online\\_workshops.html](http://www.accessart.org.uk/online_workshops.html)

"AccessArt is a valuable resource bank for teachers, gallery educators and artists as well as a fun, creative and dynamic learning tool for pupils across all the key stages, and for home-users of all ages. From this site, you can access: A series of visually exciting and innovative 'online workshops', specially created by AccessArt. The online workshops condense and articulate artist-led teaching which has taken place in schools, museums and galleries. Teachers Notes and Learners Print-Outs. Each online workshop is accompanied by explanatory notes for the educators and printable resource material which can be used directly by the learner."

7) Shifting the Focus: Choice-Based Art  
<http://www.cfralick.blogspot.com/>

A thoughtful web log written by an experienced elementary art teacher who is making a change to choice-based teaching. Clark Fralick is chronicling his learning process as he adjusts his practice for student-centered learning. Fralick uses electronic portfolios in his art classes and he illustrates his web log with fine photographs.

8) CEEP Popular Topics: the Reggio Emilia Approach  
<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/poptopics/reggio.html>

This is a collection of links and information about the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching.

9) Social Development Theory  
<http://tip.psychology.org/vygotsky.html>

A discussion of Vygotsky's theory of social development. This page is part of the Theory Into Practice Database.

10) Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge  
[http://www.utc.edu/SCEA/Intro\\_TETAC\\_Report.pdf](http://www.utc.edu/SCEA/Intro_TETAC_Report.pdf)

"In this period of high-stakes testing and a constantly shifting landscape of national and regional requirements, it has been harder than ever for American teachers to incorporate meaningful arts education into existing curricula," comments Donald Killeen, director of the National Arts Education Consortium, which coordinated the study. "TETAC addresses the intense pressures facing our teachers by providing a flexible, adaptable approach to arts learning that can be successfully implemented in any learning environment and saves the arts from becoming marginalized in relation to other disciplines."

11) Design to Learn (I/DEPPE/I)  
<http://www.uarts.edu/proj/dk12/dk12/IDEPPEI.html>

The Design to Learn program was developed at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. The model recognizes the principal activities in the design process: intending, defining, exploring, planning, producing, evaluating, and integrating.

12) From School Choice to Student Voice  
[http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2001\\_05/2001\\_heckman.htm](http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2001_05/2001_heckman.htm)

Article in American Association of School Administrators (AASA) explaining that significant choice has to be based on everyday opportunities for children to pursue their interests and prior knowledge in engaging and meaningful ways.

13) Challenging Gifted Students in Regular Classrooms  
[http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/challenging\\_gifted\\_kids.html#top](http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/challenging_gifted_kids.html#top)

How do teachers develop an instructional plan that will be challenging, enlightening, and intriguing to students of different abilities, and still maintain a sense of community within the classroom? This is the central question for educators as they begin the quest of bringing sound instruction to gifted students in regular classroom settings. This document, by Beverly Parke, lists characteristics of gifted students, the role of classroom teachers, program options, and instructional provisions.

14) Constructivist Learning Theory  
<http://www.exploratorium.edu/IFI/resources/constructivistlearning.html>

A paper presented at a conference of museum educators explains constructivism. It explains that there is nothing dramatically new in constructivist learning theory: the core ideas have been clearly enunciated by John Dewey among others, but there is a new, widespread acceptance of this old set of

ideas and new research in cognitive psychology to support it.

15) Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) by Susan Kovalik  
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog/ModelDetails.asp?ModelID=19>

ITI is a model for applying current brain research to schools and classrooms to maximize student achievement and prepare responsible citizens. Schools create a "bodybrain-compatible" learning environment. This is part of the Catalogue of School Reform Models.

16) Ride the Wave to Success in the Classroom  
<http://osi.fsu.edu/waveseries/wave17.pdf>

This downloadable pdf. file contains successful strategies for the management of learner-centered classroom. The content was created for the Florida Department of Education Office of School Improvement.

17) Fair Assessment Practices: Giving Students Equitable Opportunities to Demonstrate Learning  
<http://www.sabes.org/resources/adventures/vol14/14suskie.htm>

"Equitable assessment means that students are assessed using methods and procedures most appropriate to them." This article by Linda Suskie includes components of fair assessment and numerous assessment resources.

18) Multiple Intelligences  
<http://tip.psychology.org/gardner.html>

The theory of multiple intelligences suggests that there are a number of distinct forms of intelligence that each individual possesses in varying degrees. Dr. Howard Gardner proposes seven primary forms: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, intrapersonal (e.g., insight, metacognition) and interpersonal (e.g., social skills). This is part of the Theory into Practice Database.

19) Theory Into Practice (TIP) Database  
<http://tip.psychology.org/>

TIP is a tool intended to make learning and instructional theory more accessible to educators. The database contains brief summaries of 50 major theories of learning and instruction. These theories can also be accessed by learning domains and concepts.

20) Catalogue of School Reform Models  
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog/about.shtml>

Criteria for selecting models includes evidence of effectiveness in improving student academic achievement, extent of replication, implementation assistance provided to schools, and comprehensiveness. The catalog is produced jointly by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) and the National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform (NCCSR).

21) Concept to Classroom: Constructivism as a Paradigm for Teaching and Learning  
<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/month2/demonstration.html>

Part of the Concept to Classroom website which puts learning theory into practice. Each workshop

offered on the site is divided into four sections: Explanation, Demonstration, Exploration, Implementation. Some educators can use this website to earn professional development credits. The site was created by PBS station channel 13 in New York.

22) Kennedy Center Artsedge: Visual Arts Standards and Exemplars

[http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/professional\\_resources/standards/nat\\_standards\\_main.html](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/professional_resources/standards/nat_standards_main.html)

Presents National Standards for Arts Education proposed as a statement of what every young American should know and be able to do in four arts disciplines — dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. Their scope is grades K–12, and they speak to both content and achievement.

23) Recent Art Work from TAB Classrooms at NAEA

<http://tabnaea.blogspot.com/>

This is a virtual tour of a national exhibition of choice-based work from 14 schools in 6 states at the Arnheim Gallery in Boston.

24) The State Education Standard

<http://www.nasbe.org/Standard/index.html>

This magazine's Winter 2004 issues features Ensuring a Place for the arts in America's Schools.

25) Child Art Museum in Japan

<http://www.edu-c.pref.kumamoto.jp/ws/kmartws/index3.htm>

A group of Japanese fine arts teachers in elementary and junior high schools have collected a large and interesting database of children's drawings.

26) Gallery of the Colleges of the Academy of Bordeaux

<http://priam.ac-bordeaux.fr/galerie/>

Although this site is in French, it contains some fascinating images that could be of interest to upper grade educators.

27) Ten Lessons the Arts Teach

<http://www.toknowart.com/apsarts/eisner.html>

Eliot Eisner, Professor of Education at Stanford University identifies ten lessons which are clarified through the study of art in the schools. This is part of the Albuquerque Public Schools Fine Arts Program web pages.

28) TAB-choice Art at McAuliffe Elementary

<http://toktekart.blogspot.com/>

Ann Gray writes about her transition to student-centered art classes at an elementary school in Oklahoma.

29) Parklane Choice

<http://parklanechoice.blogspot.com/>

Deborah Gilbert teaches art in Colorado and writes about her choice-based art room on this web log.

30) Reggio Emilia: An Educational Project  
<http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/index.htm>

This is the main information page for the Reggio Emilia concept of teaching.

31) Different Ways of Knowing K-7  
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog>

Different Ways of Knowing (DWO)K is a multi-year professional development program for teachers and administrators providing an integrated approach to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting. Recognizing that every child has talent and that children learn by doing, the DWO)K curriculum provides clear and flexible guidelines for learner-centered classroom practice. Interdisciplinary, non-graded modules integrate social studies and history themes with mathematics, science, and the visual, performing, and media arts.

32) Holistic Critical Thinking Rubrics  
<http://www.calpress.com/rubric.html>

"This four level rubric treats critical thinking as a set of cognitive skills supported by certain personal dispositions. To reach a judicious, purposive judgment a good critical thinker engages in analysis, interpretation, evaluation, inference, explanation, and meta-cognitive self-regulation."

33) What's Basic: A Constructivist's View  
<http://www.kidsource.com/tobbs/articles/whatsbasic.html>

By Thomas C. O'Brien of Southern Illinois University, this is a thorough discussion of Constructivist Learning Theory and its implications and application in teaching and learning. Intriguing activities are included.

34) Art at Jackman  
<http://jackmanart.blogspot.com/>

Heather Scott writes about choice art teaching at her Ohio elementary school.

35) The Wonderful World of Discovery  
<http://www.cfralick.blogspot.com/>

Clark Fralick is a successful choice teacher at an elementary school in Indiana. This site is a virtual visit to his classroom.

36) Choice-Based Art Education  
<http://sugarcreek.newpal.k12.in.us/choice3/index.htm>

This is a growing resource for choice-based art education by Clark Fralick and Staci Konesky. Practical advice for beginning and veteran choice art teachers.

37) Teaching for Artistic Behavior: Choice-Based Art  
<http://tabchoiceteaching.blogspot.com/>

This web log contains stories from a choice classroom along with the best excerpts from writings on authentic, student-centered learning.

## 38) Transition to Choice Based Art Education

<http://clydegaw.blogspot.com/>

Clyde Gaw is an experienced elementary art educator who reflects on his change to student-centered learning augmented by electronic portfolios. His web log includes journal entries and numerous photographs.

## 39) Champions of Change

[http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/champions/exec\\_summ.html](http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/champions/exec_summ.html)

"The *Champions of Change* researchers found that learners can attain higher levels of achievement through their engagement with the arts. Moreover, one of the critical research findings is that the learning in and through the arts can help "level the playing field" for youngsters from disadvantaged circumstances."

## 40) Layers of Meaning

[http://layersofmeaning.org/archives/cat\\_creativity\\_art\\_journaling.html](http://layersofmeaning.org/archives/cat_creativity_art_journaling.html)

This is an inspiring web log of essays, images, and challenges for artists. High School art teachers will find good ideas for classroom explorations.

## 41) Learning to Think Artistically

<http://www.goshen.edu/art/ed/art-ed-links.html>

This is a very large and growing online book of ideas, innovation, and inspiration for teachers and parents by Marvin Bartel, Emeritus Professor of Art, Goshen College. Extensive information on authentic art practices, personalized learning, and the nuts and bolts of art teaching.

## 42) My Choice-Based Art Room

<http://choiceartroom.blogspot.com/>

Carolyn Kinnierly writes about her choice based elementary classes in Massachusetts. Many photographs.

## 43) Art at RMS

<http://artatrms.blogspot.com/>

Nan Hathaway writes about her innovative choice-based K-8 program at the Rocky Mountain School for the Gifted and Talented in Colorado.

## 44) TAB-ChoiceArtEd

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TAB-ChoiceArtEd/>

A vibrant online community discusses successes and problems and the place where idealism intersects with the realities of schools. Online sharing and mentoring can alleviate the isolation that art teachers often experience. The site contains message boards, polls, photo albums and other valuable information.

## 45) The Timeline of Art History

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/splash.htm>

"The *Timeline of Art History* is a chronological, geographical, and thematic exploration of the history of art from around the world, as illustrated especially by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection. The Museum's curatorial, conservation, and education staff—the largest team of art experts anywhere in the world—research and write the *Timeline*, which is an invaluable reference and research tool for students, educators, scholars, and anyone interested in the study of art history and related subjects. First launched in 2000, the *Timeline* now extends from prehistory to the present day. The *Timeline* will continue to expand in scope and depth, and also reflect the most up-to-date scholarship."

# Content Providers

This is an annotated list of organizations that provided content for this topic on The Knowledge Loom.

## 1) Teaching for Artistic Behavior Partnership

Teaching for Artistic Behavior is a nationally recognized, choice-based (learning) centers approach to teaching art. Developed in Massachusetts classrooms over twenty five years, and through courses and research at the Massachusetts College of Art, this concept allows students to experience the work of the artist through teaching which is responsive to their needs and interests.

## 2) Massachusetts College of Art

Massachusetts College of Art is a public, free-standing college of art and design. The college's professional baccalaureate and graduate degree programs enable students to contribute to the New England economy as fine artists, designers, and art educators, and to engage creatively in the well being of their society. The college aspires to be a leader in the art and design professions, and to influence the direction of the arts nationally through the accomplishment of its graduates and the creative activities of its faculty and staff.

