

Yvette Rock

Teaching Philosophy

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

(Mandela, Nelson)

I have been an artist for as long as I can remember. Throughout my primary and secondary education, I was surrounded by caring art teachers who validated my pursuit of being an artist and pointed me toward a lifelong dedication to art and art education. These experiences have laid the foundation for my pursuit of art education and a desire to make art accessible and meaningful, especially for students who live in and come from disadvantaged communities. My call is to provide students with access to art, artists, art materials, and art spaces and equip them with tools and strategies to become successful artists, critical thinkers, and caring human beings.

My classroom strategies include making the art-making process as important, if not more, than the outcome. Rather than pressure students into making each work a “masterpiece,” I emphasize experimentation, fun, creativity, and exploration. While it is important for students to gain and apply knowledge, it is equally important that they are validated for effort, taking creative risks, and yes, even “failing” at some projects rather than playing it safe and not growing. Helping children find their own creative voice and artistic approach is also important. For students to think of solutions on their own using the tools and information we give, builds the confidence needed both in and out of the classroom!

M.T.H. Sadler, the translator of Wassily Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* writes, “Modern artists are beginning to realize their social duties. They are the spiritual teachers of the world, and for their teaching to have weight, it must be comprehensible.” (1977). I am quite driven by incorporating social justice principles in the classroom. Today, our students deal with a plethora of issues that surround them but often lack the tools needed to process these issues in relevant and meaningful ways. Through engagement with art, I want students to consider the importance of art in the world and the potential art has to heal, inspire, transform, and unveil a beauty that can only come from the acts of creating, analyzing, synthesizing, presenting, and responding. This is not so they can just meet the national standards that help shape our curricula, but because it can shape who they are in the future; and who they are in the future determines what life will be like for generations to come. M.S. Hanley, author of *The Scope of Multicultural Education* writes, “The arts

tap into our need to understand and to create, to change the world in so many ways – intimate and social, tiny and enormous. The artist, whether wondering dabbler, serious student, or professional is engaged in perception, conceptualization, expression, and transformation of self, culture, and medium, all of which are at the core of making meaning of the world.” (2002).

If a student can express (verbally and/or artistically) that being in my class has taught them to love to learn and has challenged them to persevere and not give up, I have accomplished something great!