Workshop 1

Principles of Artful Teaching

*The Art of Teaching the Arts* examines how seven “principles of artful teaching” influence the curricular and instructional choices that high school arts teachers make. Each program in the workshop includes examples of teaching in dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

This program begins with teachers sharing passionate insights about why they teach the arts to young people. Then short classroom segments illustrate how arts teachers meet the needs and imaginations of their students by using the seven principles:

- Developing students as artists
- Addressing the diverse needs of students
- Choosing instructional approaches
- Creating rich learning environments
- Fostering genuine communication
- Making the most of community resources
- Nurturing independent thinkers

Subsequent programs will examine each principle in depth.

**Learning Goals**

The goals of this workshop session are for you to:

- Describe principles of good teaching that apply across the arts
- Consider similarities among teachers, actors, dancers, musicians, and visual artists
- Identify teaching goals that you and fellow arts teachers share, and that you would like to work toward in the rest of this workshop
Getting Ready (15 minutes)

What makes teaching both an art and a science? What do good teachers in all disciplines know and do that has sustained, substantial, positive influence on students?

As you begin this series of eight workshop sessions, reflect on your current teaching practices. Make notes in your journal and then discuss and compare how you:

- Develop students as artists
- Address the diverse needs of students
- Choose instructional approaches
- Create rich learning environments
- Foster genuine communication
- Make the most of community resources
- Nurture independent thinkers

Keep your initial journal entries to compare with your developing ideas about artful teaching practice.

Watching the Program (60 minutes)

In this program, you will see teachers applying the principles of artful teaching in dance, music, theatre, and visual art classes. As you watch each of the seven teaching segments, consider how the teaching shown—regardless of discipline—relates to your own teaching.

Fill in the Viewing and Discussion Sheet found at the end of this chapter as you watch. This will help you prepare for the activities that follow. The information sheets provide helpful background on the schools, arts programs, and individual classes featured in each segment.

Activities and Discussion (45 minutes)

Part I: What All Good Arts Teaching Has in Common (25 minutes)

In this workshop, you are joined by colleagues who teach art forms other than yours. What broad goals for students do you and your colleagues share? What teaching ideas and approaches do you have in common? The following activities are aimed at helping you identify the common teaching goals that you would most like to work toward in this workshop.

Where, in the program you have just seen, did a teacher who was not in your discipline inspire you the most, or remind you of a goal or a value that you hold important in your own teaching?

Look at the notes you made on the Viewing and Discussion Sheet while watching the program. Take turns describing for the group the teaching moment that most resonated with your own practice.
As a group, try to name five or six broad teaching goals that you all hold in common. Compare your list to the seven “artful principles” above. Where do the lists agree? Where do they differ? Decide as a group which artful principles are most important to you.

**Part II: The Improvisational Act of Teaching and Learning (20 minutes)**

Read the following passage about the similarities between teachers and jazz musicians:

Master teachers—teachers who teach all students well—make decisions about what to teach and how to teach it based on an ongoing conversation involving their students, the course content, and themselves, with the ever-present goal of improving learning and the educational experience. Master teachers understand that each day is an improvisational concert, a musical conversation with their students.

Good improvisational jazz musicians don’t know until the music starts where the night will take them. What they play and how they play it depends on the other musicians with whom they perform, their moods, the atmosphere, and the audience. Such musicians are not seeking consistency or replicability; they are striving for magic in the moment. They create something unique by listening carefully to one another; by anticipating their fellow musicians, and their instruments; and by surprise. A welcome element of the unknown keeps them exploring new territory, discovering new possibilities making new music. Good jazz musicians are tireless learners. If they stop listening to others, stop seeking new paths, stop inviting surprise into their musical conversations, they lose their mastery. Mastery in teaching follows the same path.


Discuss how useful the comparison between jazz musicians and teachers is to you. Are there important differences as well? Would you amend the comparison in any important way?

Then, propose and discuss similar correlations between teachers and actors; teachers and dancers; teachers and visual artists.
Homework

Read the following passages about five characteristics of art and artists that can be applied to teaching. Then, in your journal, rate yourself twice on each characteristic, once as an artist, and once as a teacher. For example, for the characteristic of creativity, first rate your creativity as an artist—i.e., a practitioner of visual art, dance, music, or theatre—from 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest). Then rate your creativity as a teacher. When you are done, look over your ratings. Which area would you most like to work on and improve as a teacher? Why?

Teaching As Art

Artists are fully engaged and committed to purpose. In the case of teachers, the engagement and commitment are to learning. To facilitate student learning artistically you must be a student yourself, fully engaged and committed to learning, actively seeking new ways to understand your discipline and how your students learn, gaining insights and nuances from the material, from the students’ interpretations, and from connecting students and material.

Artfulness embodies art and science. For teachers this means drawing on the intrinsic link between art and science to enhance learning outcomes. Painters’, sculptors’, and printmakers’ success depends on a full understanding of the chemical properties of the materials they use. Teaching becomes artistic when we understand in a detailed and scientific way how it affects learning.

Art requires creativity. Artful teaching is not craft; it is more than the skillful application of teaching techniques. The artful teacher is always trying new materials and new approaches to fit the needs and interests of the specific learner at hand, never feeling that the “perfect material” or the “perfect approach” has been found. The teacher’s world is dynamic, filled with uncertainty and challenge, and teaching strategies are guided by a compass, not a road map. Artful teachers have the ability to be spontaneous and to improvise: to seize the moment and make it into something larger and more compelling.

Artists grow and stay inspired through play, experimentation, and practice. When unexpected things occur they are embraced by artists as valuable opportunities to learn, the specks of irritant or dust that lead to pearls. Likewise, teachers must draw on their ability to always remain learners. In serious and intense academic environments, it’s hard to be “playful,” but the notion of having fun is a way of taking ourselves less seriously, and from that perspective we often see and understand things more clearly. This orientation can give us the space we need to experiment and to fail.

Finally, there is between artists and their material a special relationship. With teachers, the materials are our students and the special relationship is the need we have to create communities of learners. We can develop these strong relationships with and between students in the content materials through which we seek to engage them. We can nurture it by setting and keeping a reasonable pace. We can further promote it by setting the tone, which involves everything from the configuration of the classroom space to the way people are included in the unfolding action.

As its core, artful teaching focuses on learning—learning for teachers and learning for our students. It means being involved in a dance in which we may lead in the beginning, but then we let our partners provide movement and energy and direction. The artful teaching is helping self and students become artful learners, and there are as many paths to do this as there are teachers who are trying. Artful teaching lies in liberating the gifts that students and teachers bring to the classroom.

Adapted from Weimer, Maryellen, “Teaching As Art” in The Teaching Professor, Vol. 12, No. 3, March 1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Segments</th>
<th>In the spaces below, note teaching moments that relate to your own teaching – especially if they occur in art forms other than yours.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing Students as Artists</td>
<td>MUSIC teacher Carmen Laboy works with a beginning band ensemble and an advanced jazz band.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addressing the Diverse Needs of Students</td>
<td>VISUAL ART teacher Jan Wilson coaches individual students and adapts assignments to their different learning styles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choosing Instructional Approaches</td>
<td>THEATRE teacher John Fredricksen works with pairs of students who are writing and reading scenes from original plays.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating Rich Learning Environments</td>
<td>DANCE teacher Michael O’Banion models constructive criticism as he helps students learn to partner with each other.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fostering Genuine Communication</td>
<td>THEATRE teacher John Fredricksen and his colleagues help students learn to communicate across disciplines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making the Most of Community Resources</td>
<td>VISUAL ART teacher Jan Wilson takes students to a nearby sculpture park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurturing Independent Thinkers</td>
<td>DANCE teacher Michael O’Banion uses feedback to improve students’ performance as they learn a new technique.</td>
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The Art of Teaching the Arts

Program 1: Principles of Artful Teaching
Developing Students as Artists
SEGMENT 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Carmen Laboy - MUSIC
20 years teaching

About the School
Christopher Columbus H.S.
Bronx, NY
Type: Urban/Comprehensive
Grades: 9-12
Students: 4,000
Low/Middle socio-economic status
Arts Requirement: New York has a 1-credit art or music requirement (180 minutes per week for one year)

About the Instrumental Music Program
Faculty: 1 full-time
Students: 175
Facilities: Above Average in the Area
• Band room
• Instrument room
• Multipurpose auditorium
Required Courses: None
Elective Courses: Beginner Band, Intermediate Band, Concert Band, Jazz Band, and Pep Band

About the Featured Classes
Beginner Band:
Students who have never had an opportunity to play an instrument before learn how to play an instrument of their choosing and participate in an ensemble.
Preparations/Prerequisites: Students must be interested in learning to play a band instrument. They must be committed and have passing grades in other classes.
Student Motivation: High
Student Level: Novice
Typical Subsequent Course: Intermediate Band

In the Teacher's Words
How would you describe your role as a teacher?
I believe that what I should do as a teacher is bring out the best from each student. I'm not only here to teach about music. I'm here to teach about different aspects of life.
Sometimes that means sitting down and listening when a student has gotten a bad grade, or if something has happened to them personally. You have to make the time.

How do you help students pick the instrument they want to study?
I get some of my students from the advanced bands to come in and play a little part of a song so the beginners can see, this is a student just like me. It's my peer. It's not the teacher that's playing the instrument. It's a student – maybe I can get to be like him or her.

Jazz Band:
Students learn traditional Big Band and Latin jazz music, which is especially challenging rhythmically.
Professional jazz musicians who live in the neighborhood come in regularly as guest artists to play alongside the students, offering tips and coaching.
Preparations/Prerequisites: Students have been in Concert Band and are particularly gifted since there is only one instrument per part in Jazz Band.
Student Motivation: High
Student Level: Advanced
About the Featured Classes

Sculpture Garden Project:
Students from the Sculpture class and the Advanced Architecture class worked cooperatively to design the garden. They established an ongoing relationship with Grounds For Sculpture, a local foundation featuring over 200 contemporary sculptures on beautiful landscaped grounds. Last year’s students and this year’s mix of students are installing the garden and beginning to create work for it. [ Segment 6 ]

Preparations/Prerequisites:
Each of these students is taking Sculpture, has taken Sculpture, or is enrolled in the Honors program.

Student Motivation:
High

Student Level:
Intermediate/Advanced

In the Teacher’s Words

How do you adjust your instruction to meet the varying development of students in the Art Fundamentals class?

The beauty of an art studio is that each student works at his/her own pace. Individual goals are set for some students that allow them to work at their level of ability. If there is a student with learning challenges, we first examine the IEP in order to support the learning environment. That could be as simple as allowing a student to take the work to a resource room for additional guidance after class, additional time, test-taking support, or in some cases, simplifying an assignment or redesigning it to work on a discrete skill.
# About the School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mamaroneck High School</th>
<th>Grades:</th>
<th>9-12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mamaroneck, NY</td>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type: Suburban/Comprehensive</td>
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**Facilities:**
- Well Above Average in Area
- 220-seat proscenium theatre
- Control Booth
- Lighting board + lighting instruments
- Sound mixer
- 2 classrooms - including a music room
- Office for our official business

**Arts Requirement:**
New York has a 1-credit art or music requirement (180 minutes of instruction per week for one year)

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# About the Performing Arts Program

**Faculty:**
- 3

**Students:**
- 245

**Facilities:**
- Well Above Average in Area
- 220-seat proscenium theatre
- Control Booth
- Lighting board + lighting instruments
- Sound mixer
- 2 classrooms - including a music room
- Office for our official business

**Required Courses:**
- The Performing Arts Curriculum Experience (PACE)
  - PACE 1 – Introduction to the performing arts (theatre, dance, and music), full-year course, mostly filled with freshmen
  - PACE 2 – Beginning technique in theatre, dance, and music, full-year course, mostly filled with sophomores
  - PACE 3 – Advanced performing arts (theatre, dance, and music), full-year course, mostly filled with juniors
  - PACE 4 – Theatre, dance or music concentration, full-year course, seniors only

**Arts Requirement:**
New York has a 1-credit art or music requirement (180 minutes of instruction per week for one year)

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# About the Featured Classes

**The Performing Arts Curriculum Experience (PACE):**

Students elect to take this curricular program, which offers them four progressive years of study in theatre, dance, and music as well as extra-curricular performance and production projects. Students study across the performing arts out of a belief that performers learn better when they learn all of the performing arts. For example, actors learn better if they are experienced in dance (learn to use their body) and music (learn to use their voice) and vice versa.

In Segment 3, students learn the fundamentals of playwriting.

In Segment 5, students explore the technical aspects of performing arts production.

**Student Motivation:**
High. Most students have seen past productions or have been in productions in middle school and wish to learn more, improve, and have fun.

**Student Level:**
Novice to Advanced

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**In the Teacher’s Words**

*Can you describe the PACE experience, in particular the educational approach and sequential nature of the program?*

Much of the work that we do would be considered “child-centered.” Most of our in-class and after-school projects are devoted to original work. Students choreograph the dances, write the plays, and compose the songs.

The curriculum was developed in a sequential manner matching the growing maturity level of the students. Freshman do short in-class projects while seniors work on projects over weeks. We rely a great deal on older students mentoring younger ones. Building a sense of community within and across grade levels is a particular goal.
About the School

Denver School of the Arts
Denver, CO

Type:
Urban/Arts-focused

Grades:
6-12

Students:
900
Very mixed socio-economic status

Majors:
Creative Writing, Dance, Theatre, Instrumental Music, Stagecraft & Design, Video & Cinema Arts, Visual Art, and Vocal Music

About the Dance Program

Faculty:
2 full-time + resident and guest artists

Students:
115

Facilities:
Above Average in the Area
• 3 large dance studios
• 2 theatres (178 seats, 550 seats)
• Full light grid
• Dressing rooms

Required Courses:
Modern, Ballet, Jazz, African & Spanish, Improvisation, Composition, Repertory, Performance Technique, Partnering, and Senior Seminar

Elective Courses:
Tap, Hip Hop, and Pointe

Audition:
Technique Master Class, individual choreography showings, and interview

About the Featured Class

Intermediate Dance:
Students, mostly eighth- and ninth-graders, learn the fundamentals of partnering, including weight-sharing, lifting, and contact improvisation.

All dance majors take this course and are expected to integrate the lessons into their movement vocabulary and choreographic process.

In Segment 4, students explore the concept of partnering.

In Segment 7, students receive informal feedback.

Preparations/Prerequisites:
Beginning Level Dance or equivalent

Student Motivation:
High. This is a required course with a performance outcome and must be completed before moving to the Advanced Level.

In the Teacher’s Words

How does partnering class fit into the language of dance?

The students go through a series of partnering classes, where they learn how to deal with body weight and how to share weight, so that the duet form becomes part of their vocabulary. Duet forms speak to personal relationships of one on one. Group choreography speaks more about the tribe or the group or society. The solo is much more personal. We try to get those three forms very strongly under the students’ belts so that they understand when to use each one. That way they’re making choices. They’re not feeling that those groupings are dictated out of some abstract, intangible place.

Program 1: Principles of Artful Teaching
Creating Rich Learning Environments
Nurturing Independent Thinkers
SEGMENTS 4 AND 7 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Michael O’Banion - DANCE
20 years teaching
Additional Resources

On the Web

General Sites
The Art of Teaching
http://radicalacademy.com/adlerteaching2.htm
   Mortimer J. Adler's insights into the nature of teaching
The Seven Deadly Comments that Get in the Way of Learning About Teaching
   A rebuttal to a litany of arguments about why we can't or shouldn't bother to learn about teaching
The Gallery of Teaching and Learning
http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/index.htm
   Web-based examples of ways that teachers can make ideas, insights, and new understandings available so that others can build on them
Teaching as Scholarship
http://www.nyu.edu/cte/Scholars.html
   Exercises for thinking about how you teach

National Dance Organizations
National Dance Association
http://www.aahperd.org/nda/design.cfm
National Dance Education Organization
http://www.ndeo.org/

National Music Organizations
MENC: The National Association for Music Education
http://www.menc.org/
American School Band Directors Association
http://home.comcast.net/~asbda/
American String Teachers Association
http://www.astaweb.com/
National Association of Teachers of Singing
http://www.nats.org/welcome.html

National Theatre Organizations
American Alliance for Theatre and Education
http://www.aate.com/
Educational Theatre Association
http://www.edta.org/

National Visual Art Organizations
National Art Education Association
http://www.naea-reston.org/
Magnet Schools of America
http://www.magnet.edu/themes/arts.htm

School and Teacher Sites
Christopher Columbus High School
http://www.columbushs.org/index2.html
   Web site for band teacher Carmen Laboy's school
Nottingham High School
http://www.hamilton.k12.nj.us/secondary/north1/
   Web site for visual art teacher Jan Wilson's school
Grounds for Sculpture
http://www.groundsforsculpture.org/
   The sculpture park where Jan Wilson takes her students
Mamaroneck High School Performing Arts Curriculum Experience (PACE)
http://www.mamkschools.org/mhs/
   Select: Special Programs, then Performing Arts and TV Studio
   Web site for the Mamaroneck High School department that includes John Fredricksen's theatre program
Denver School of the Arts—Dance Major
http://dsa.dpsk12.org/
   Select: Majors, then Performing Arts Department
   Web page for the dance program that Michael O'Banion chairs
Additional Resources, cont’d.

In Print


---------. –and stuff– Baker’s Plays, 1985. ASIN: B0006ELRNY


The books from which John Fredrickson chooses lines of dialogue to help his students start writing their scenes


Describes different approaches to the teaching of the arts and the virtues each possesses when well taught


Presents the case, based on what is known about the brain and learning, for making arts a core part of the basic curriculum


Applications of the ancient Chinese wisdom of the Tao Te Ching to a contemporary public-school setting


Offers helpful parallels between the work of educators and artists, including similar motivations, and opportunities to convince, inspire, and persuade others to action


From a perspective that views teachers as actors, uses the traditions of stage performance to inspire connections between teachers and students


An accessible introduction to the art of teaching as seen through the eyes of John Dewey