



Choice-Based Art Edited by Nan Hathaway

Choice-Based Art classrooms are working studios where students learn through authentic art making. Control shifts from teacher to learner as students explore ideas and interests in art media of their choice. This concept supports multiple modes of learning to meet the diverse needs of our students. Learn more at teachingforartisticbehavior.org.

ARTISTIC BEHAVIORS OF A TEACHER

BY TIFFANY ERIE

Creating assessments, teaching standards, planning lessons, collecting data, displaying art and grading for my 850 elementary students—the “business” of teaching art can be overwhelming! But when I look to the heart of teaching in a choice-based art classroom, it's about making choices using artistic behaviors.

AS I WORK ON MY GOAL for the upcoming school year—incorporating the “Studio Habits of Mind,” as written about in *Studio Thinking 2*, by Hetland, Winner, Veenema and Sheridan—I find myself asking many questions. The biggest one being, “how do I teach the Studio Habits of Mind (SHoM) to my students while allowing them to find their own habits/behaviors and also remember that I have my own artistic behaviors?”

The Studio Habits of Mind I’m referring to are: develop craft, understand art worlds, engage and persist, stretch and explore, envision, reflect, express, and observe. These behaviors do not happen in a particular order and can look very different for every artist.

The behavior that I have struggled with lately is *envision*. As I watch my students work, I struggle with deciding if I should expect them to do a particular number of sketches before they begin their final work. How should I teach them to envision? Envision is described in *Studio Thinking 2* as “*learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed and imagining possible next steps for making a piece.*”

My process for envisioning includes using sketches and having a fully developed and researched plan. But I cannot expect my elementary-aged students to be at that level or have that same behavior. They need the chance to incorporate play, curiosity and experimentation so they can understand and recognize their own habits for envisioning.

ONE OF THE MANY BENEFITS of choice-based art education is that students are given the opportunity to take ownership over their own processes. If I step in and tell them an expected way to envision, I am not allowing them the opportunity to have that ownership. I can, however, dem-

onstrate my process for this behavior.

During student work time, it’s easy to get busy attending to students’ needs, refilling centers’ supplies, assessing and demonstrating techniques, incorporating art history, and holding mini critiques. But my favorite times are when I am struck with an idea because a student, material, or random collection of happenings, has inspired me.

This is my chance to practice my own artistic behaviors. I typically try to make a quick note, take a picture or, better yet, sit down with a couple of students to work and chat. These moments are when I learn more about the students, they learn more about me, and I about myself, because this is when students begin asking me questions about my process.

My goal as an art educator is that my students leave their elementary art experience with the ability to think creatively, develop ideas, and apply curiosity and play to their work to help them think critically. When I take the time to demonstrate my artistic behaviors or studio habits, I observe that my students are more comfortable with sharing their own discoveries and behaviors they have worked through.

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TEACHING FOR ARTISTIC BEHAVIOR is about learning from each other and acknowledging that we all work and learn differently. Stopping in those moments and acting on my own artistic behaviors is one way I can demonstrate how an artist

works. I need to understand my own curious moments, how I play with materials and think critically about my work, develop and plan for my creative ideas. My students need to see all of that happen.

Since I made the switch to choice-based art, I am able to sit with the students and work on some of my own ideas. I now take the time to think creatively myself. I can be an outstanding art teacher, but, if I get so caught up in the business of being a teacher and forget my own artistic behavior, then I am doing a disservice to my students. They and I both need the reminder that I am not just an art teacher. I have my own creative ideas and artistic behaviors that I can model for my students. ■

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