My Philosophy of Art Education

In the years since I graduated from college my philosophy of art education has developed from purely studio based to include the more modern integrated curriculum. But yet my feelings about the importance of child development and my strong devotion to allowing a student create their own works of art have remained basically the same.

Issues of development must be attended to carefully to assure that students are comfortable with the assignments as well as the other students in a particular class. Because I have taught a various range of ages and abilities, developmental levels have always been very important to my teaching. I’m usually very concerned with getting a child in the right age and ability level of class so he or she will not become frustrated. A teacher must also be very aware of developmental levels to be able to detect those students with special needs or who may be gifted in art. Teachers must be prepared to adjust their teaching appropriately to accommodate for all types of learners.

My work as an artist has been invaluable to my teaching, because it has helped me to realize the importance of art education. Giving students the opportunity to succeed in the creation of their own works of art gives them confidence for whatever life may bring. I also feel very strongly that a student is the artist of his or her own artwork. A teacher should never alter a student artist’s creation or the artwork may no longer be solely that of the student’s and it’s ownership becomes uncertain.

I am particularly interested in how drawing affects young people. Children begin drawing at an early age. It is exciting to watch them develop in their drawing. When young they are constantly drawing and then drawing drops off drastically as they move into junior high. But drawing may actually be more important to them than we realize. Young people are continually being confronted with the drawn image in cartoons and video games. As they get older they are constantly copying these images. Why not build on that influence by allowing them to create in the medium that they know best? Ask them to draw what they see, feel and experience. There are so many ways that drawing can be used for students to learn, from cartooning to book illustration.

I do also realize that not everyone can use drawing best when they are trying to create. There are many who feel intimidated by drawing. Other areas of the visual arts can and should be used in conjunction with drawing as often as possible. For example some stu-
Students may create better in three dimensions or with computer design. Students must be given the opportunity to experience as many areas of the visual arts as possible through a well rounded visual arts curriculum.

These experiences could be carried over into regular school curriculum by collaboration between the classroom teacher and the art teacher. Why not extend a unit of study into the area that many children love best? The learning in a unit could actually be intensified by having students tie all subjects together. They might actually remember art project before some of the other more passive activities in a study unit. Teachers in other disciplines should never underestimate the importance of the art teacher in an integrated curriculum.

Art needs to be a separate discipline as well. Although I do feel that some integrated activities could be good for upper grade levels I also think that it is important to give older students some exposure to studio art as well. Drawing, painting, three dimensional artwork, art history and other visual arts should be offered as separate subjects if possible. Students have to realize the importance of art as a separate field of study and to understand that there are many different types of visual arts to experience.

I also feel very strongly about issues of giftedness in the visual arts. Students who are gifted in the visual arts should get similar opportunities to gifted students in other areas of study. There are many gifted art students who struggle in the regular classroom. Perhaps these students should be given the opportunity to use their gifts in the visual arts to help them excel in other areas as well. They must also be encouraged to participate in extra curricular activities in the visual arts to further enhance these gifts.

I feel that art education needs to be a balance of several ideas. The arts need to be involved in the regular curriculum to give students a chance to experience the artistic side of a particular issue, but yet it also needs to be a separate discipline with its own issues and topics. Students need to be taught the fundamentals of art but they also need to be taught about its diversity. They need to learn about the many different types of art from ethnic, to classical, to graffiti and how they relate their general education and to life itself. Since I graduated from college, art education has evolved into something much more important than just construction of pieces of art. It is now a very important tool for learning, every bit as important as any other part of school curriculum.