

STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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My most important teaching strategy is to create an intimate, personal connection between students and what they learn in the classroom. I believe that this personal link enables me to reach students on an emotional level, create a certain resonance, and, consequently, help them personalize their learning process. My interest in focusing on student perspectives in instruction has grown from my exploration of an artist and teacher self. I encourage my students to look into themselves first, examining *who they are* and *what they can do as artists and teachers*. I then lead them to incorporate what they have discovered about themselves into art making.

Based on my teaching experience in various educational settings and with diverse populations, I find it critical to examine a particular course's target audience thoroughly before beginning each class. This research allows me to offer a learning environment specifically oriented to the students who are enrolled. In art education courses for pre-service teachers, I attempt to make a connection between each student's personal motivation to be an art teacher—why he or she decided to teach art—and my teaching materials, including my lectures and class projects. My teaching philosophy, which focuses on interactions with students through examination of their lives, is based on my recognition of a gap between concept and reality—theory and practice, in another sense. Educational research seeks to formulate precise knowledge by conceptualizing practices in educational fields. During my research process, I attempted to keep the concepts that I utilized as alive and accessible as possible, but a certain distance between theoretical constructs and educational reality still grew. I believe that to quantify this distance and to attempt to reduce the gap is an important responsibility for art educators, like me, who bridge teaching and research.

At East Carolina University, I have been teaching online art education courses with a studio art focus for the last twelve years. Online education has been the perfect cross section for my teaching and research. Creating a personal connection with my online students requires new strategies and technologies that may differ from traditional methods. Throughout this pedagogical and artistic journey, I came to the conclusion that I need to focus on the following three factors to be a successful online instructor: *instruction*, *interaction*, and *assessment*. My students greatly value interactive communications with their instructor and peers to receive artwork feedback and to participate in discussions focusing on diverse art education topics. As a result, they build a supportive learning community to encourage each other in the process of art making.

I believe that the most important aspect in teaching and learning is sincere, person-to-person interaction between students and teachers. As my professors did for me, I hope to stretch my hands out to my current students to not only teach them, but to also work with them, even after our traditional teaching relationship has ended. If I continue to create personal connections with my students through my teaching practices and art materials, I believe that I will be able honestly to say to them, "I am right here for you" whenever they need me.