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the NYSATA news

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Creativity - Moving Beyond the Idea

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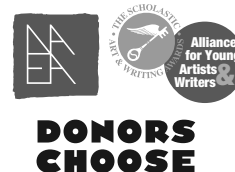


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President's Message



"An idea is a point of departure and no more." —Pablo Picasso

"The chief enemy of creativity is 'good' sense."—Pablo Picasso

As we move into the final stretch of the school year, our classrooms are alive with a very particular kind of energy—part inspiration, part urgency, and part “we have exactly three classes left and the clay is still... still... still drying”

This edition's theme, Creativity—Moving Beyond the Idea, could not be more fitting for this moment. In our studios, we witness daily the journey from imagination to creation. We know the spark of an idea is only the beginning. The real magic—and yes, sometimes the real struggle—comes in helping our students push beyond that initial thought into something tangible, meaningful, and complete.

Because if we are being honest, ideas are the easy part. It is everything that comes after—the doubt, the revisions, the “I do not like it anymore”—that defines the creative process.

Many of our students come to us believing creativity is something you either have or you do not. A fixed talent reserved for “the artistic.” But through our work, we challenge that narrative every day. We show them that creativity is a process—messy, nonlinear, and absolutely teachable. We guide them through brainstorming, iteration, and reflection. We normalize mistakes. We celebrate risk-taking. And sometimes, we simply remind them to keep going when they would rather start over for the fifth time.

In doing so, we are not just helping them make art—we are helping them build confidence, resilience, and a willingness to engage with uncertainty. Through thoughtful instruction and the integration of Social Emotional Learning, we create spaces where students feel safe enough to try, fail, adjust, and ultimately succeed.

Of course, we know these challenges are not limited to our students. As artists, we live this process ourselves. We know what it means to sit with an idea that will not quite work, to question our direction, or to walk away and come back (sometimes more than once). And that is why our community is so essential. NYSATA continues to be a place where we uplift one another, share our practices, and remind each other that the struggle is not a barrier—it is part of the work.

That sense of community extends beyond our classrooms and into the broader advocacy work that strengthens our field. I am especially excited for the continued momentum of leadership and advocacy through our national connections, including opportunities with the National Art Education Association this July. Even in the heart of summer, when many of us are finally stepping away from the daily pace of teaching, this work continues—because advocating for art education is truly a year-round commitment.

And speaking of summer traditions I happily cannot quit—I am already looking forward to returning for my second year at Summer Institute at Great Camp Sagamore. Apparently, one year was all it took—I am officially hooked. There is something special about gathering in a space where ideas are shared so freely, conversations spark new directions, and creativity feels both personal and collective. (Also, let us be honest—the setting does not hurt.)

This issue invites you to reflect on your own creative journey and the spaces you cultivate for your students. How do you help them move beyond the idea? How do you build confidence in the face of uncertainty? What does creativity look like in your classroom—and how are you preparing students to carry those skills into the world beyond school?

As we head into summer, I encourage you to give yourself the same opportunities you provide your students: time to explore, permission to experiment, and space to create without pressure. Visit a museum, try something new, or return to a medium you love. Let ideas evolve naturally—without the countdown of a class period or the looming deadline of a display case.

Thank you for the courage, creativity, and humor you bring to this work every day. You are shaping artists, thinkers, and problem-solvers who are learning not just to have ideas—but to bring them to life.

Wishing you a restorative, inspiring, and (somewhat) glitter-controlled summer.

Colorfully Yours,

Kelly Verdi
President, NYSATA 2025-2027

About the News

The Association shall focus on the following purposes in support of its mission:

- Secure wider recognition of the importance of art education for all
- Develop and implement strategies for statewide advocacy
- Research, analyze, and inform the membership about current policy and practice, as well as social, legal, educational, health-related, and economic issues that affect art education
- Provide high quality professional growth opportunities for the membership
- Recognize the achievements of students and art educators in New York State
- Foster leadership among members of the Association and within the profession of art education
- Monitor and influence policies and legislation that affect art education at state and local levels
- Eliminate discrimination; cultivate values of equity, diversity and inclusion; promote equal access, opportunity, and voice across groups of people of diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs

NYSATA News Mission Statement

The *NYSATA News* desires to bring informative content in an easy to read and understand form to the art teaching professionals of our New York State Art Teachers Association membership.

Written by art teachers from pre-K to college level, this newsletter seeks to present meaningful and helpful narratives about the challenges, failures, and successes in art classrooms. The editors feel that there are valuable resources for educational theory and practice available elsewhere – and that this publication showcases authentic classroom experiences, where art teachers reveal their insights, frustrations, discoveries, mistakes, and triumphs – personal and instructional.

Our mission is to be a platform for teachers' voices. We believe that our pages are a valuable place to share experiences, and that the honest, informal quality of the writing provides realistic inspiration and a genuine sense of community in our profession.

The mission of NYSATA is to promote and advocate for excellence in art education throughout New York State.

The *NYSATA News* publishes official announcements for NYSATA as well as commentary and research on topics that are important to art educators. The opinions expressed in editorials and articles are those of the authors and do not represent NYSATA policies. The *NYSATA News* encourages an exchange of ideas and invites submission of news or articles for publication. Please label files with your last name and the date, example: smith4-15-26. To submit news or articles, please contact Editor Valerie Savage by email at nysatanews@nysata.org. Advertising inquiries should be sent to sponsorship@nysata.org.

The *NYSATA News* is published three times a year electronically and one time each year as a printed issue for the fall conference. Any inquires about receiving the *NYSATA News* should be sent to Membership Chair Terri Konu at tkonu@nysata.org. To change your address, please log into the NYSATA website and update your own address and contact info in your profile.

Photo Submissions: Graphics should be in jpeg, tiff, or pdf format, 150ppi. Photographs and print-ready art are always welcome in jpeg or pdf format. For purposes of accurate identification and acknowledgement, photos sent to the *NYSATA News* must be accompanied by the following information: your name, phone number, and e-mail; name and address of photographer; and first and last names of persons in the photo (in order from left to right, front to back). If artwork is presented, the artist's name, school name, teacher name, and NYSATA Region must be included. Additionally, any photos that depict students under 18 must have parental permission to be printed. If school district policies do not cover permission, NYSATA can provide the necessary form.

An award-winning publication, the *NYSATA News* has been named winner of the National Art Education Association State Newsletter Award Category 3 in 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2025, and 2026. Chosen by a panel of visual arts educators from across the nation, this award honors art education publications that demonstrate outstanding achievement and exemplary contributions to the field of art education.

Members of the 2025-2026 Contributors Board

NYSATA President.....Kelly Verdi

NYSATA Committee and Program Chairs..... names on the last page of the newsletter

Photographers.....Jen LaCava and Robert Wood

NYSATA members interested in serving on this board or contributing articles are encouraged to contact Valerie Savage at valhsav@gmail.com

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Cover art: photograph from 2026 OVA Event

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	Committee Columns		Events
			NAEA

Editor's Message

Valerie Savage



Creativity—Moving Beyond the Idea

This is the time to celebrate!

Across New York State art educators have successfully guided students to **move beyond the idea** and to take the essential steps required to turn ideas into original artwork! The Olympics of the Visual Arts (OVA) and the Legislative Exhibit, highlighted in this issue, are excellent showcases of these achievements. Participation in one or both activities and/or your end of the art exhibit provide an opportune time for reflection and evaluation of the accomplishments and the challenges of the 2025-26 school year.

As you reflect, I encourage you to read the insightful articles written in this issue. Authors share their approaches and thoughts on creativity with examples from their classrooms and their own personal artistic journeys. Building confidence, thinking independently, developing resilience, learning to explore how art can make you stop, look and feel and working to make magic happen in the classroom are explored in one or more of the articles. In addition, you will find authors' thoughts on ways to prioritize your personal art practice and why it is important to do so.

Also, program chairs have highlighted current activities or current offerings. Take the time to become familiar with the many opportunities NYSATA offers to members. Have you submitted artwork to the NYSSBA show? How will you advocate before you close your classroom door for the summer? Do you have the 2026 NYSATA Conference on your calendar? Will you consider writing for the fall issue of *The News*?

The theme for the fall issue of *The News* is *The Artist—Body in Motion*. Taken from the 2026 NYSATA Conference theme, *Body, Mind and Soul*, articles for the issue will focus on how the artist's physical body affects, inspires, makes, and can transform artwork. A look at the article in this issue, *Fueling Creativity Through Art and Movement*, by author Jessica Nash provides an excellent lead and transition into the fall theme. Please look for the *Call for Contributions* on page 60 for further details.

Thank you to all who shared insights on *Creativity—Moving Beyond the Idea* for this issue. The rich and thoughtful articles are greatly appreciated. Wishing all of you a wonderful summer filled with many rewarding artful experiences.



2026

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| June 30 | Submission deadline for the NYSATA/NYSSBA Exhibit |
| July 19-25 | NYSATA Summer Institute at Great Camp Sagamore (week 1) |
| July 25-31 | NYSATA Summer Institute at Great Camp Sagamore (week 2) |
| July 24-26 | NAEA National Leadership Conference |
| August 10 | NYSATA News Fall Submission Deadline |
| Sept. 1 | NYSATA Conference Registration Opens |
| Oct. 22-23 | NYSATA-NYSSBA Student Art Exhibit |
| Nov. | Applications open for Vision Award |
| Nov. 20-22 | NYSATA Conference Albany, NY |

2027

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Jan. | Applications Close for Vision Award |
| March 4-6 | NAEA Convention New York, NY |

Conference Save the Date



Awakening Awareness Through Artistic Practice

**NYSATA 78th Annual Conference
November 20-22, 2026
Crowne Plaza (The Desmond), Albany, NY**

Art has the power to unite thought, movement, and inner life—engaging the whole human experience.

This year's conference theme explores the integration of **mind** (critical thinking, perception, imagination), **body** (movement, material engagement, sensory awareness), and **spirit** (meaning, identity, purpose, connection). As classrooms evolve to address student wellness, cultural awareness, and holistic learning, art education remains uniquely positioned to nurture the full self.

Through artistic practice, educators and students alike can cultivate presence, empathy, resilience, and creative agency. This conference will serve as a space for reflection, renewal, and inspiration—honoring both the rigor and the restorative power of art-making.

INSPIRING KEYNOTE SPEAKERS • COMMERCIAL & COLLEGE EXHIBITORS • OVER 100 WORKSHOPS STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS SHOW • FRIDAY AFTER DARK EVENT • HANDS-ON STUDIO WORKSHOPS NYSATA AWARDS EVENTS • PRESIDENT'S DINNER MEMBERS' ART EXHIBIT & AUCTION • ARTISANS MARKET • WHOVA CONFERENCE APP • AND MORE!

Please join us for the NYSATA 78th Annual Conference, *Mind, Body, Spirit: Awakening Awareness Through Artistic Practice*. Together we will explore teaching as an embodied, mindful, and deeply human practice and consider the ways art can foster awareness, wellness, identity, and meaning—for both educators and students.

Spoiler Alert! For the Saturday afternoon keynote address, we will host multidisciplinary artist, **Heather Hanson**, recognized for her “kinetic drawing” performances in which she uses her body as a drawing tool to create large-scale, symmetrical charcoal works.

We also have Board Certified Art Therapist, **Lisa Kay** and sculptor/installation artist, **Jean Shin** joining us for Super-Sessions on Friday and Saturday.

Together, we will explore how art engages cognition, embodiment, emotional intelligence, cultural consciousness, and reflective practice across all learning environments.

Registration opens September 1. More information is available at www.nysata.org/2026-conference.

Registration

- \$179 Member Early Bird
- \$209 Member After November 1
- \$140 Student/Retired/Unemployed Member Early Bird
- \$170 Student/Retired/Unemployed Member After November 1
- \$265 Non-Member (No Early Bird Rate)

Meals

- \$254 Meal Package
- \$39 Friday or Saturday Lunch
- \$58 Friday Plated Dinner
- \$68 Saturday Plated Dinner
- \$50 Sunday Brunch
- \$169 Room Rate at the Crowne Plaze Albany

In Memoriam *Jessica Bayer*



Jessica with her daughters, Eve and Tracey



Jessica with her grandchildren

On April 19, 2026, the world of art education lost one of its greatest advocates, Jessica Bayer. Jessica started her career in art education as a teacher at the Willow Road School in Valley Stream and eventually became the District Chairperson for the Hewlett-Woodmere Schools.

How can I describe Jessica? She was creative, artistic, knowledgeable, a leader, and an enthusiastic advocate for art education. I first met Jessica while attending a Region 9 hands-on workshop at her school in Valley Stream. She was the Region chair and we quickly became friends. The next thing I knew, she was asking me to run as her co-chair for the Region. We traveled together going to conferences and meetings across the state and the country.

Jessica was the first two-year President of NYSATA, 1999-2001, and during her tenure had the only state conference on Long Island. She envisioned the changing landscape of art education.

During her presidency she left a lasting mark on Art Education. First with the writing of the Curriculum Companion—she brought art educators from across the state together to write a comprehensive curriculum to be used to facilitate educators across the state and the country. The Curriculum Companion was used by educators to enhance and guide their curriculum, not to supplant it.

Jessica's next endeavor was to create the Portfolio Project. She arrived at her school one morning and saw a huge banner congratulating the students who had participated in NYSSMA, and said to herself, "why can't art students be adjudicated on their artwork?" Once again, Jessica brought art educators together from across the state to write the

Portfolio Project, based on the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts. This comprehensive, authentic assessment continues to be an encouraging and confidence-building experience for students and art educators across the state.

Students participating in the Portfolio Project are adjudicated on the elementary, middle and high school levels as well as Advanced Placement. This is a regional event that happens every year across the state where students bring their artwork to be adjudicated. They sit one-on-one with an art educator and discuss their work on which they are scored and receive a certificate. The Portfolio Project was recently revised to align with the goals and priorities of the 2017 revised New York State Learning Standards for the Arts, and so will continue to represent the legacy of Jessica Bayer.

For many years, Jessica also worked with Dan Welden in organizing a month-long summer experience in Italy where art educators could explore their own artistic talents. Dan spoke about Jessica this way:

"When teaching summer workshops in Florence, Italy, Jessica signed on as my student. She took me aside and with a strong suggestion and smile and said, 'I can administrate this program for you.' Jessica's initiative made numbers increase from 14 participants to over 50, along with five faculty over the 10-year program. Not only that, but Jessica also took the burden off my shoulders when we had prima donna students complain about insignificant things such as the dust bunnies under their beds.

Jessica was a dear friend, and more. "Her intelligence, quick wit and hard work ethic was like a rock foundation

for me and our 10-year summer program in Florence. We would have telephone conversations and there would always be laughter and good humor.

We spent many an evening with a glass of Chianti Classico talking about ideas and philosophizing. Her daughters, Eve and Tracey, were always the major love of her life while the other passions always kept her occupied. NYSATA was a priority as were her friends and colleagues, her dog and her art making and her love of cooking. I have been missing Jessica during these past few years and know everyone who knew her feels our loss."

Jessica was always there to share her expertise and knowledge. She contributed to the 1996 New York State

Learning Standards for the Arts and became a turnkey trainer to facilitate their implementation across the state. Jessica also contributed to the ASSETS Assessment pilot in the early 2000's and the development of the NYSED Middle Level Performance Indicators. She also conceived of the NYSATA District Membership Program, which allows more art educators and students in New York State access to the amazing programs, conferences, and opportunities NYSATA offers.

Jessica has certainly left her mark on Art Education and NYSATA. Jessica will be missed but her legacy lives on; she was one of a kind.

Jane Berzner
NYSATA Past President 2003-2005



Pat Groves, Jeff Smith, Jessica Bayer and Mitch Viotsky



Jessica Bayer, Roger Hydman, and Jane Berzner

Continued Memories and Thoughts...

There is something to be said for longevity. If you have been fortunate to have been around for a good amount of time, your life will become filled with many things, good and not so good. My NYSATA lifetime has been long, and it has been filled with many, many good things. One such good thing has been Jessica Bayer. A staunch advocate of Art Education Jessica worked tirelessly at all levels from her own classroom to the local regional level and on to the state. Her willingness to always be there and to put in the time and effort will be sorely missed as we go forward in these uncertain times. Always ready with a smile and kind words Jess was a force. I am thankful for having served with her in NYSATA and having her as a friend. You will never be forgotten.

Harry Posnanski
NYSATA President 1985-1986



NYSATA Past Presidents pictured with Jessica left to right: Sharon Ciccone, Bob Wood, Cindy Henry Wood, Jane Berzner, Jessica Bayer, Cindy Wells, Lisa Lawson, and Harry Posnanski

.....

We met in the 1990's when she came on to the Representative Council of NYSATA as a section rep from LIATA. She had good ideas and was tenacious in her conversations about improving the organization. She was President-Elect during my tenure as NYSATA President and was helpful with current issues facing art education. I was fortunate to have her and Jennifer Childress as advisors in 1998 when speaking to NYS Regents forum and advocating to legislators. She also gave me a tour of Long Island from her home in Hewlett when I attended a UFT/NYSATA conference. She was graced with knowledge and persistence to achieve attainable goals for art education in NYS and will be remembered for her determination.

Lisa Lawson
NYSATA President 1998-1999

.....

Jessica Bayer was one of the first people I took notice of when I joined the NYSATA Board of Trustees. She caught my attention right away because she was full of ideas and she was not afraid to lay them out on the table and work through the messiness of making them reality. Her mind was always working; her creativity, intelligence, and tenacity were the impetus for many of the NYSATA programs we have in place today. Always a force, there was no such thing as a "little bit of Jessica." If she was in, you got Jessica one hundred percent. She advocated hard for what she believed in, and the friendships she forged were ironclad. She was so proud of being a mother and a grandmother, and I am sad for the time her family has missed--and will continue to miss--with her.

Cindy Henry-Wood
NYSATA President 2009-2011



NYSATA Past Presidents Back Row: Harry Posnanski, Lisa Lawson, Front row: Jessica Bayer, Jane Berzner, Jennifer Childress, Cindy Henry Wood, Bob Wood, Joan Davidson, Dr. Pat Barbanell, Cindy Wells, and Pat Groves

Service as President: Jessica was the first NYSATA President to serve a two-year term.

Portfolio Project: My first contact with Jessica was in an early training session for the original Portfolio Project. Always generating new ideas and avenues of student support, Jessica was deeply involved in the development and rollout of the Portfolio Project, originally designed to complement the 1996 NYS Standards for the Arts, aligning the Standards with representation of student learning via portfolio development and an adjudicated process in Elementary, Middle School, Secondary Foundation, Elective, and Major Sequence. It was the first time teachers from all over the state had a benchmark for presenting evidence of standards-based instruction. Finally, a guide for all in our field to teach what we should be teaching!

My introduction to NYSATA and NYSATA leadership began with the Portfolio Project, eventually serving with her as Portfolio Project Co-Chair.

Curriculum Companion: In addition to the Portfolio Project, Jessica was a driving force in the development of the Curriculum Companion, a supportive framework for Secondary Foundation instruction, aligned with the then NYS Art Standards, and the NYSED Commencement General Education Level (CGEL) Assessment.

Service to her region in Long Island: Jessica served for many years on the Board of Trustees as a regional co-chair. She was a strong supporter of Art education in Long Island.

Service on the Conference Committee: Jessica served on the NYSATA Conference Committee, not only exploring sites for annual conferences, but also working with vendors and the vendors' exhibit with her dear friend and colleague, Jane Berzner

Influence on My Service: I will always fondly recall a Saturday morning, manning the Portfolio Project booth at the Rye Conference, Jessica and Jane were walking around the vendors' hall, when Jessica struck up a conversation with me. The conversation ended with Jessica, always the idea person, casually planting a seed in my head, saying, "You should consider running for President." Funny how her ideas always take root...

I hope Jessica will be remembered as that "idea person," always committed, in her own way, to the betterment of this association. In whatever initiative she was involved in, Jessica approached her service with moxie (just an inside joke, for once, saying I had chutzpah, lol). Rest in peace, Jessica. NYSATA is a better association because of your service.

Bob Wood
NYSATA President 2015-2017



Jane Berzner, Valerie Savage, and Jessica Bayer

I still remember attending my first NYSATA Conference and meeting Jessica. Her strong admirable presence immediately stood out, and I quickly came to respect her knowledge, dedication, and experience in art education. Equally inspiring was her commitment to students and her determination to create meaningful opportunities through initiatives such as the Portfolio Project. Her contributions will continue to benefit art educators and students for years to come. I will always treasure the encouragement Jessica gave me when I became President. The NYSATA Board of Trustees table is not the same without her.

Valerie Savage
NYSATA President 2019-2021

Jessica's passion for all things NYSATA and Portfolio Project, were infectious. I remember her having me over many times to bring me onto the Nassau County Region 9 board back in 2015. She nominated me for Art Teacher of the Year for region 9 in 2019 and is one of the major reasons I am sitting as President today. She gave me the confidence and the push to get involved with NYSATA and in our region.

Kelly Verdi
NYSATA President 2025-2027

The **Jessica Bayer Scholarship**, named for a founder of the NYSATA Portfolio Project, awards \$500 to two selected seniors who have received a rating of Distinguished at the high school level of the NYSATA Portfolio Project. An increase in these scholarships has been made possible by a generous matching donation from the daughters of Jessica Bayer, Eve and Tracey.

NYSATA welcomes donations to the scholarship fund in Jessica's memory. Checks should be made payable to NYSATA and sent to PO Box 4502, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29597. Please note "Jessica Bayer Scholarship" in the memo of the check. Questions? scholarships@nysata.org

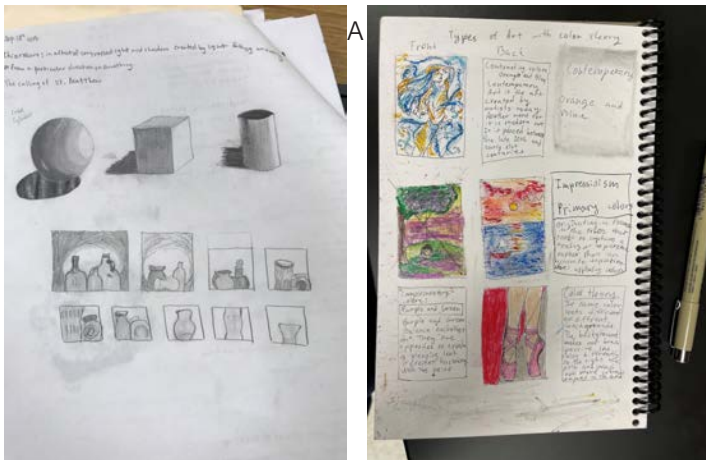
From “Is This Right?” to “What If”: Building Creative Confidence

“...I do believe I can create the conditions where creativity can happen.” - Susan Rudy

One of the biggest challenges I see in my students is not a lack of ideas, it is a lack of confidence. Many come into my classes already convinced they are “not creative” or that they have to get it right the first time. They hesitate, overthink, or avoid starting altogether because they are afraid of getting it wrong. I hear it all the time: “Is this right?” or “Is this what you’re looking for?” That question alone says a lot. Most of the time, the issue is not ability, it is confidence.

So, can I teach creativity? I am not sure I can teach it directly. But I do believe I can create the conditions where creativity can happen.

In my practice, creativity is not about waiting for a great idea to appear. It is about the process: trying something, seeing what happens, making adjustments, and trying again. In many ways, being “creative” is really about experiencing that process. I design assignments where students are expected to generate multiple ideas, not just one “perfect” solution. They create, review, make choices, and reflect. Over time, they begin to understand that strong work usually comes from doing the work, not waiting for the idea. Shifting from “Is this good?” to “What happens if I try this?” helps students move forward.



big part of this is helping students get comfortable with uncertainty. I make the process visible. We talk about decision-making, not just final outcomes: what worked, what did not, and what they would do differently next time. I want them to trust their thinking, not just look to me for the “right” answer. When students begin to see uncertainty as part of the process rather than something to avoid, they become more willing to take risks.

That kind of environment is intentional. I work to create a

space where students feel comfortable experimenting without fear of judgment. That does not mean lowering expectations, it means valuing growth and effort alongside the final result. I also design assignments that require students to connect their work to their own experiences. That leads to more authentic outcomes and a stronger sense of ownership.



I work through many of these same challenges in my own art making. It is easy to get stuck waiting for the right idea or second-guessing your work. What has helped me is continuing to make work, even when I am unsure where it is going. Participating in exhibitions and taking classes has pushed me to keep creating and to put my work out into the world. It reminds me what it feels like to take risks, meet deadlines, and share work publicly, the same things I ask my students to do. When students see that I am also taking chances in my work, it makes the process feel more real for them and shifts the focus from getting it right to working through it.

For me, creativity is not about having the best idea. It is about being willing to start, to stay with it, and to learn from the process, even when it feels uncomfortable. So maybe I do not teach creativity in the traditional sense. But I do teach the habits that support it: persistence, reflection, risk-taking, and openness. And when students begin to trust their thinking, their confidence grows, and that is when creativity really starts to take hold.



Susan Rudy is a Visual Arts Educator for the Virtual Academy of Rochester, where she teaches AP Art History, Art History, and dual-credit courses in Digital Photography and Studio Art. She has been part of the Virtual Academy since its launch in 2013 and now works full time to grow the art program and support students across the district.

With over 20 years of experience teaching Visual Arts in RCSD, including at School of the Arts, Susan is passionate about student-centered arts education and creating authentic learning experiences through exhibitions, community partnerships, and real-world artistic practice.

Creative Reset: Making Space for What Already Exists

“This shift—from “I don’t have enough time to create” to recognizing that creativity can actually help us access joy in a demanding environment—is powerful.” - Jalilah A. Jackman

Creativity is often misunderstood as something reserved for a select few—those who are “naturally talented” or artistically gifted. In my work with both children and adults, I actively challenge this belief. I see creativity not as something we are born with or without, but as something that can be nurtured, practiced, and expressed in many different ways.

When I taught visual arts daily, one of the primary ways I helped students move beyond this myth was by exposing them to diverse artists and forms of expression. Through storybooks and visual exploration, students began to understand that art does not have to be realistic or perfect to be meaningful. My favorite artists to introduce this concept are Jean-Michel Basquiat and Wassily Kandinsky. They allow students to see that art can be abstract, expressive, and even “messy.” This realization opens the door for students to begin trusting their own ideas.

Currently, as a site coordinator with the New York City Department of Education, I extend this same philosophy to the teachers I support. In grade team meetings, I incorporate art and wellness practices that encourage reflection, creativity, and release. I remind teachers that they are already creative in the many decisions they make each day with children. I also emphasize that art can be a tool for regulating the many stressors and emotions that come with being a teacher. This shift—from “I don’t have enough time to create” to recognizing that creativity can actually help us access joy in a demanding environment—is powerful.

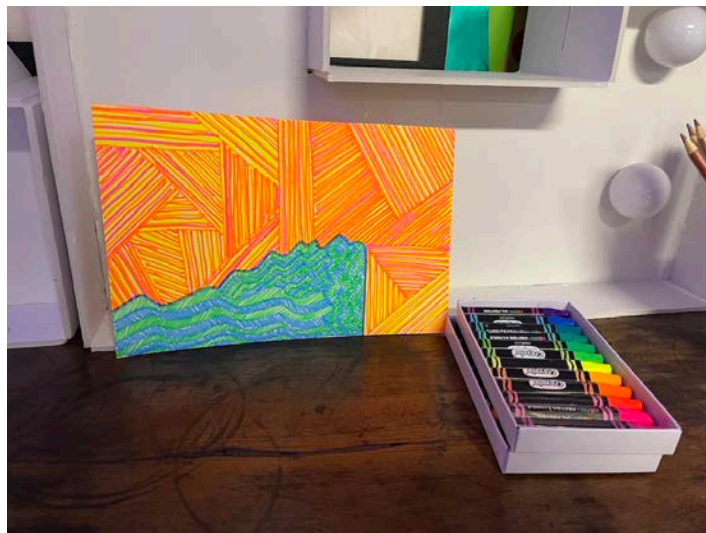
For example, my school is going through significant structural changes that have been overwhelming for many of us. During a mid-year survey, I asked teachers to vote on topics they wanted to explore during grade team meetings. “preventing teacher burnout” received many votes.

In response, I offered a mini-Creative Reset. I began the meeting with quality cardstock, oil pastels, colorful markers, and a variety of drawing tools. I played soothing music and invited teachers into the experience with two prompts:

“Draw what your stress looks like.”
“Now, draw what support or relief could look like for you.”

What emerged was powerful.

Some teachers used heavy, dark scribbles to represent



“overwhelm”, while others drew specific images—stacks of papers, clocks, or storm-like patterns. In the second round, many shifted into lighter colors, creating images of calm—beaches, quiet spaces, or simple symbols like hearts and open windows.

That moment reinforced for me that creativity is already within us—it simply needs space, a pause, and a judgment-free environment to come forward.

While I am not certain that creativity can be directly taught, I do believe it can be unlocked. With encouragement, flexible guidelines, and exposure to different techniques, individuals begin to trust themselves. Creativity grows when people are given permission to explore without fear of being wrong. I have also found that creativity extends far beyond

artmaking. It lives in everyday decisions—what we wear, how we decorate our spaces, and how we express ourselves in small, personal ways. When creativity is practiced in daily life, it becomes easier to access in artistic spaces. I find this to be true for children, adults, and everyone in between.

When I was a visual arts teacher, I supported idea generation through both individual and collaborative approaches. With younger students, I often began with group brainstorming sessions, especially to support non-verbal students and English Language Learners. Students would share their ideas while I recorded their responses on chart paper, often adding simple visuals to support understanding. This process validated their voices and provided a meaningful starting point for their work.

I also found that using natural materials and connecting artmaking to students' lived experiences was one of the most effective ways to spark authentic, uninhibited creativity.

During one project-based learning experience, I asked students and their families to bring in twigs and branches. At the start of class, I arranged the materials in our meeting area for students to observe. We discussed where the materials came from, and I invited students to imagine what we could create with them.

Ideas came quickly and with excitement:

"Handlebars!"

"Canes!"

"Railroad tracks!"

And then, finally—

"Magic wands!"

At that moment, the energy in the room shifted. The group lit up with excitement, and we carried that momentum into our following class sessions as we began creating.

We even watched short videos of magic wands in use and discussed what we would use our own wands for, allowing imagination, storytelling, and personal meaning to guide the creative process.

In both settings, I have learned that confidence in creativity develops when individuals feel safe. Creating a climate for creativity means prioritizing emotional safety, openness, and acceptance. In my space, there is no single "right way" to create. Instead, there is room for exploration, curiosity, and personal expression. Reflection is also an important part of this process, allowing individuals to connect more deeply with their work.

When students engage in creative work, they are not simply making art. They are learning how to navigate uncertainty, express themselves, and trust their ideas. They are developing the confidence to think independently and the resilience to keep going, even when the outcome is unclear.



Creativity, then, is not just about the final product. It is about the process, the recalibrating, the growth, and the willingness to move beyond the idea and into something real.

Jalilah A. Jackman, M.Ed., is a Site Coordinator with the New York City Department of Education and the founder of The Painted Page. Her work centers on using art and creative practices to support emotional wellness, confidence, and connection in both educational and professional settings.



Creativity Building With the 5 Cs

“All students are fully capable of being creative in the art room.” - Catherine Brewer



“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up,” Picasso could not have said these words better. Can creativity be taught or are we born creative? Indeed, if we are born talented, do we master our creative skills by consistently nurturing, cultivating, and fostering them along the way making us better artists? And if we do not continue to build sustainable artist habits

will our talent extinguish itself over time like a dimly lit candle? Participating in the arts is second nature to art educators because we are artists who love art and are dedicated to our practice and our creative processes.

If creativity is taught, what key ingredients would satisfy a positive outcome for the students you are teaching? Let us stir the pot a bit more. What defines an artist and at what point are students considered artists? How do you inspire, motivate, and educate a student through the arts who has no passion for the subject? And once we have mastered teaching creativity, how do we make it stay so students are lifelong learners of the arts? Many questions, so let us dive right into some answers.

My philosophy of teaching is to allow my students the opportunity to interpret, reflect, and understand the visual arts world around them. Introducing students to the cultural aspects of art educates them to understand the many attributes that different ethnicities contribute to our society as a whole.

Art helps them to work collaboratively together and independently—thus preparing them to be productive well-rounded individuals. Art is an expression of life. When setting

the environment for all learners, it is imperative for me to bring out the best in my students. Primarily by creating an environment in which they feel seen, valued, and understood, a framework is built that allows their creativity to flourish. Art builds self-esteem and confidence. It allows students to take risks in their art-making decisions, creating a pathway for developing good judgements, analytical skills, and problem solving.

All students are fully capable of being creative in the art room. Let us first start by defining the term “creative.” According to Merriam-Webster, “creative, or creativity, is the ability to generate original, imaginative ideas, solutions, or artistic works by thinking outside conventional boundaries...”. Can we teach our students to be creative with that definition? We sure can!

There are five Cs that I start with in the visual arts room and they all start with...Building. 1) Building Confidence, 2) Building Connection, 3) Building Creativity, 4) Building Community, 5) Building Collaboration. These five Cs can be interchangeable at times.



Primarily I start with building confidence.

A simple lesson can be the greatest one. I start off with a line lesson that I call “Make Your Mark.” The lesson requires one large white mural piece of paper. Each student draws a different line on the paper choosing an art material of their choice. Stations are set up in the art room for free creative expression. They have a choice: either draw their own line or add a different line connecting and continuing upon their classmate’s last line. We all clap for each student no matter what line is created or art medium they choose.

Self-expression builds confidence. I keep repeating to them "We are all important and every line counts." Eventually the entire class starts repeating our new mantra. Now who created the experimental lines? They did! The process of creating art leaves no room for disappointment or failure because the finished piece is not important at this stage, building their confidence is. There is no such thing as a mistake. When the line work is finished each student discusses the type of line they chose and how it made them feel. Our finished class masterpiece is immediately displayed in the art room. As an art educator it has been my experience that when we build student's self-esteem, we empower them to be future leaders of tomorrow.

One small but powerful way of **building connection** occurs when I stand and wait patiently for my students to arrive in the art room. Greeting them outside the classroom door sets the tone for a warm and welcoming environment. I want them to know that Ms. Brewer is waiting for them because they are important. I am forming a bridge of connection with them and a roadway of trust. My opening line is "It's a great day to make some art, now who is ready?" Students read energies extremely well. No student is going to be enthusiastic about a subject that the teacher is not even excited to teach. Setting the tone for the class and getting to know your students increases motivation and a positive classroom culture.

There are many ways of investigating art to **build creativity**. Finding the courage to create art is the first step. In my experience showing a variety of artworks with the same subject matter but created in different styles, materials, and time periods is a great way to demonstrate to students that art is limitless in creation. Artists make us feel, and art communicates in a way that words do not.

Art is a universal language. For example, take a look at "Ladybug" by Joan Mitchell 1957. I show students this artwork and we investigate it by having a VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies session). I ask the students without telling them the name of the artwork "What do you see? What can you find? What is it that makes you say that?" After all students respond I ask the question "If you could name this painting what would you name it and why?" After hearing their remarkable and surprising answers I announce the name of the actual painting. After all the gasps and responses of "no way", "what?", "how?", and "where, I don't see it?" they eventually settle down.

I then introduce the art style of abstract art and how every artist expresses art differently. Some artists want to show us the impactful feeling they get from the object they are creating or the pure element of art. Shortly after, I show the student a realistic painting of a ladybug and ask them to describe the differences in the artist's work.

Students come to the realization that art has many meanings and can be created in numerous ways. Showing students visuals and resources supplies them with the background

information that they need to have the courage to create. Now they are artists. When planning a lesson all students must be engaged. In order to be able to take risks and to problem-solve in their own art making processes, students need to feel successful and confident when creating art. So, what about the students that say, "I don't like art!"? Drawing a connection that is familiar and meaningful to them is helpful or placing supplies at art stations allows free exploration of materials. I find that when students state they do not like something before they even try it, they actually lack the confidence because they do not know how. Allowing students free exploration gives them the opportunity to see what they like and build upon that exploration.

The steps for a successful art project have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Students need to be able to think, plan, and strategize. Let us not forget about the revision stage (the works in progress (WIP)). I tell my students if you are having a block brainstorming take your time and reflect and remember your work is a WIP. Once I had a second grader submit his final artwork and he signed it "WIP". He stated, "An artist's work is never done."



How can students improve their work based on the criteria of the art lesson?

Prompting and asking open-ended questions always seems to do the trick. Guiding students is key to leading them down the path of their own "Eureka" moments. For ex: if we are working on collage portraits a question to ask could be: "Have you included all facial features in your portrait?", "What type of background were you thinking of?", "When looking at your



classmate's portrait is there anything else they can include in their work?" I find that students can give each other the best meaningful accountable critiques when they are given a prompt. Engaging in an artist walk involves the display and viewing of all work. Students then write on a post it how they can improve their work or a peer's work. After I model this, they verbally state one thing they admire about the artwork. Allowing each student to participate and add to the conversation builds creative community and value to them as an artist and to their artwork. It is important to mention that we are discussing the artwork not the artist. Creating art develops self-esteem. By conducting structured feedback session in a safe and positive environment, students focus on the art and not the artist who made the piece. This should be an activity after every art unit—working to foster creativity consistence is key. Spark your student's engagement and illuminate teaching practices. It is that passion that brings out the best in every student. Creative energy is blossoming. Learning becomes fun and innovative where positive attitudes towards creating art emerges. It is here where a foundation for visual arts success is achieved and only then that we achieve creativity by moving beyond the idea.



Building Community in Visual Arts is not limited to the classroom or the beautiful bulletin board displays of artwork that transforms the hallways into museum galleries. Creating an arts community for my students in which they have the opportunity to explore beyond the classroom and have real life artist experiences is pinnacle. Every year I submit and enter my students' artwork into the Brooklyn Borough Arts

Festival. One year my student won the Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition. I always inform my students that art is a BIG DEAL, and it EMPOWERS. They get so excited to know that their artwork has been accepted. But what if it is not accepted? Does this mean it is not meaningful because someone else did not see the value in it? Absolutely not! I inform my students all the time, "You value your work, that is the most important thing that matters, there will always be a space or a place for your masterpiece". Once students realize that there is a whole creative world out there it opens up a universe of potential, motivation and acceptance beyond what they have ever fathomed.

Let us look at New York State Portrait of a Graduate. It's deeply rooted in the arts. Some of the key components are Creative Innovator, Critical Thinker, Effective Communicator, and Culturally Responsive. These categories are the framework of our blueprint for the visual arts.

We teach our students through artistic practices, skills and knowledge leading to creative risks. This sheds light of the importance of arts educators, we are no longer, "just a prep teacher". I was once told "classroom teachers need their preps to do important stuff". We are professionals and we also do "important stuff". We should be taken seriously as such and not be pushed to the background (respectfully not to say the backgrounds of some paintings are not beautiful because they are...but you get my point), we are the foregrounds. We bring out the best in our students, and we are the fabric of our school communities.

Lastly **Building Collaboration** with students. Now that our students are "Artists", having them work together and collaborate on art projects prepares them for future skills... teamwork. Students develop respect for their peers and trust their judgement in creating art together. This does take time but once confidence and connection are established creativity emerges in the art room. Modeling this behavior and working together with colleagues sets the tone. You will never find me not (yes, that was a double negative) participating in school wide activities that promote the arts, allow for student engagement and/or supports school wide initiatives. In my experience art is the heart of the school. Collaboration fosters community and community is built on collaboration. The five Cs for me are the groundwork for successful artist achievement. As a lifelong learner I am always improving and educating myself to support diverse student needs.

Now let us discuss *artists as teachers* and the interchangeable fluid roles we play in our profession. How can we balance and manage our time to produce and create our own work? I have struggled in the past with finding the time to practice my own art making. I have discovered a BLOCK. Not an artist block but more of "I'll block this off and do it later".

It was not until I started teaching my students art history that I noticed a pattern. A large portion of amazing artists that dedicated most of their lives to teaching were only able to create their artwork after retirement. Teaching is rewarding





and fulfilling, and we learn so much from our students. They are resilient, fearless, and full of imagination AND...SO ARE WE. Let us not forget that WE ARE ARTISTS FIRST. Let us awaken our passions and dedicate a consistent daily practice. Even if you only have 15 minutes a day. Make it happen. Create clearer boundaries. I now prioritize my time as if my life depends on it. No longer do I entertain anything that has no relevance to my vision, and this includes people, places, and things. I am intentional with my endeavors. Wow, that sounds harsh, but no one will fulfill your art goals but ... YOU.

Now I am UNBLOCKED!

I set deadlines and establish routines for myself as an Artist in order to make sure that my goals are being met daily. The expectations that I have for my students are NOW the same expectations I place on myself as an Artist: holding myself accountable for my own art making, goals, and dreams. My groundwork is simple. I do not find the time—I make the time.

You never want to look back at your life and think...should of, could of, would of. You must accomplish your dreams, even if you have to create a rubric and a checklist for yourself. Make It Happen!



Catherine Brewer is an Artist/ Writer/Visual Arts Educator who has over a decade of experience teaching art from grades PreK-12. She is an arts advocate for her students and strongly believes that the arts unite us all. Catherine is a School-Based Mentor and her passion for the arts has inspired her to form her own company Artful Marks LLC. In 2026 she is anticipating her debut picture book. She is a NYSATA Region 8 member and works in District 75.

Creativity—Moving Beyond the Idea in the Art Gallery and Classroom

“... it is important for us to keep growing and learning ourselves through professional development and personal projects.” - Heather Heckel

As an artist I continually transform creative ideas into tangible artwork, and as an art teacher I model that creative process for my students. A recent exhibit invitation reminded me that as art professionals we focus on creative transformation, in the classroom and beyond. For the past decade I have been awarded 30 artist residencies through the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management, and my most recent, at Gateway National Recreation Area—Sandy Hook Unit on the Jersey Shore, marked the milestone of my thirtieth residency. Ranger Mikayla, who helps supervise their artist residency program, called with an exciting new opportunity. Since 2026 is our country’s 250th birthday she suggested that my residency culminate in a 10-year retrospective solo exhibit that highlights 250 pieces of my residency artwork. Since Sandy Hook preserves a former military base, she offered a large gallery space across several holding cells in the Post Guardhouse, which is now a museum. Thus, my solo art show was born, *10 Summers and 250 Years: Advocating for Our Public Lands through 30 Artist Residencies*. An exhibit itself is a visual record of realized creative ideas, and installing such a large show requires the same creative process. I approached this challenge as both an artist and art educator.

They say that teaching students in the classroom occupies the smallest portion of our workdays. There is the time spent researching and developing lessons, setting up, cleaning up, engaging in endless classroom management, building relationships with our students, grading, matting, designing bulletin boards and art displays, communicating with parents and administrators, meetings, and commuting. I find that a similar phenomenon is true when creating my own artwork. Drawing and painting feel like they take less time than coming up with the creative idea, researching, sketching compositions, securing the supplies, preparing for it to be viewed by others, and storing it properly. Or at least time seemingly passes more quickly in a flow state of actually making the art. As I prepared for my exhibit, I realized that the steps and life lessons that I went through turning this art show into a reality serve as teachable moments for my students in the art classroom.

Keep Your Artwork and Store It Properly

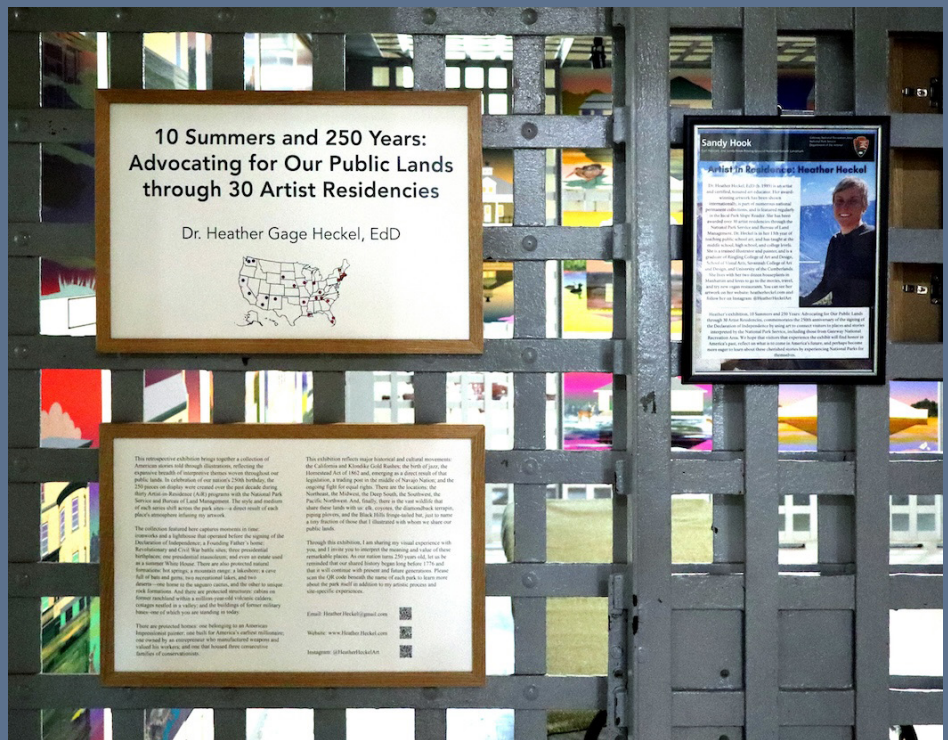
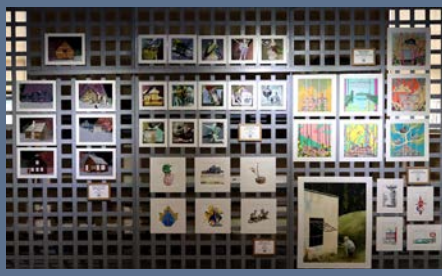
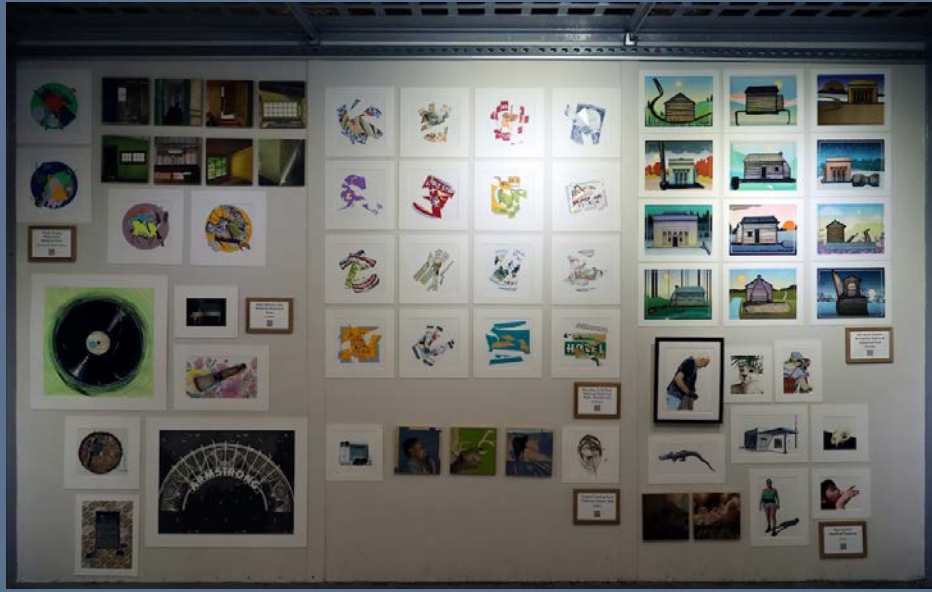
I live in a 700 square foot apartment in Manhattan, and I have exactly one small hall closet where I can store my artwork. I somehow managed to save all 375 pieces of artwork that I have created during my artist residencies, which also included moving five times. I had them carefully stacked behind the vacuum cleaner and next to the recycling bin, so I was able to sift through them to curate 250 pieces for the exhibit.

In the classroom, I have students store their artwork in personal folders that are kept stacked in their table folders. Organization provides less distraction when they are being creative and prevents damage and lost work. On the last day of each quarter, when my students will no longer have art class for the remainder of the school year, some students are eager to throw away their work, but I do not let them. I make students take home their artwork and let their parents and guardians decide what they want to do with it—I know they will appreciate seeing what their child has created. It is a teachable moment to demonstrate the importance of personal artwork, and to instill a value of the pieces they have spent hours working on—their own tangible memories of creativity that moved beyond an idea.

Presentation Is Essential

When I was earning my BFA in Illustration at the Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, FL, I was fortunate to have professors who were professional illustrators with the highest standards. They constantly emphasized that it is crucial to present our artwork in the best possible way. Someone could create the most brilliant piece of artwork, but if it is displayed poorly that flaw is all the audience will notice. Even though we were just students we had to present all our assignments in impeccably clean and accurately cut mats. This lesson never left me, and I made sure all my pieces were properly matted and framed for the exhibit.

In the classroom, I make sure that my students understand the importance of keeping their artwork as pristine as they can, ideally free of smudges and errant marks. To communicate this to the school community, I carefully double mount all the artwork I display in the hallways.



Time Management

I consider myself to have a dual career as an artist and art educator, and in order to do this I have to devote time to each. My school days present a predictable schedule to be an educator, so the challenge is to find time to work on my artwork. I have found that working just five minutes a day on a personal project is satisfying since I am working toward an artistic goal. I find time on my 47-minute Long Island Railroad commute to and from work, sometimes on hall duty and my lunch period, and during evenings and weekends. For my Sandy Hook residency I decided to create 30 pieces to commemorate my 30 residencies. The park has us log our volunteer hours, and when I tallied them up, I was amazed to see that over several months I had worked a total of 430 hours on this project—every minute adds up.

To teach my students time management in the classroom, I have a projected timer on my white board that counts down how many minutes (and seconds!) are left until clean up time. The expectation is that students work up until they hear the timer buzz, then they know they have three minutes to complete their clean up jobs before the bell rings. I have a timer for each class that I calculated according to my teaching schedule, and my browser remembers those times. I press Start on all five timers, when the 8:00 am bell rings so I do not have to think about it during my day, and I scroll down for each class, so they only see their timer (if you are interested in this routine, I use <https://www.timeanddate.com/timer/>). I often hear students telling one another how much time they have left to work during their period since they do not have to ask me. I also appreciate that I can fully focus on helping a student and not have to keep an eye on the clock.

Things Always Take Longer Than You Expect

This phenomenon has a name, Hofstadter's Law, and it is always important to build in extra time because of it. Hofstadter's Law includes our human tendency to be optimistic, therefore not anticipating realistic obstacles, and our inability to accurately predict the complexity of a task, especially when steps are revealed along the way. Big surprise, finishing thirty large paintings took longer than I thought. In my mind I told myself I would simply complete three paintings a day to meet my goal, but once I began painting, I realized it would take longer than that to finish each one, and I adjusted my deadline to be more realistic.

In the classroom I do not announce a deadline at the beginning of a project, rather I create daily deadlines of what students should be achieving during the class period. Every student works at a different pace, and I monitor how much progress the class makes as they work through the individual steps of the assignment. Once I can see approximately how much time is needed to complete the entire project I will turn it into the deadline.

"There Are Many A Slip 'Twixt The Cup And The Lip"

My mother, who was an artist, loves to invoke this old adage, meaning things can go wrong in the space between the birth

of a creative idea and bringing it to fruition, and in fact we should expect it. True to form, this was a reality in planning my art show.

Problem #1: The Dented Delivery. Since Sandy Hook is hosting the exhibition, I wanted to make a big statement from my residency there and decided to paint on thirty 24"x36" aluminum panels, which weigh about 5 pounds each. I was working on a tight deadline, and when the panels were shipped to my apartment the deliveryman left the 150-pound package in my building lobby—I live on the fifth floor with no elevator. I had to unpack the large cardboard box on the ground floor and carry up a few panels at a time. Once I got them all into my apartment, I was thrilled that my workout was over but then discovered to my dismay that 13 of the panels were dented. It took several hours to document the damage and chat with a customer service representative to reorder them. Luckily the company was willing to replace them, but it took two additional weeks for the new shipment to arrive, coincidentally they arrived when I was on a plane to Florida. I had to contact my super and ask him to bring the package upstairs to my landing so it would not be in the way of my neighbors, then wait five more days to find out if the new shipment was intact, luckily it was, but it significantly ate into my deadline.

Problem #2: The Magnetic Mishap. Since the Sandy Hook Gallery is housed in former holding cells, all the walls are made of metal, and happen to be magnetic. Some of the walls are solid, but most are made of a lattice with five-inch square gaps between metal strips. In order to make sure that my artwork could stick anywhere I used two horizontal magnetic strips that ran the length of the back of the artwork to catch the lattice no matter the positioning on the walls. When I arrived at the Post Guardhouse to hang all my work, the smaller matted paper pieces stuck to the walls successfully, but the large aluminum pieces did not. There was not enough surface area on the magnet strips touching the latticed walls so they would not stick. Luckily, I had booked two days to install and had bought extra magnetized strips ahead of time. On the second day of the installation, I had to measure, cut, and adhere several additional magnet strips on all the pieces that were being displayed on those walls. There were also previously unnoticed ridges running down some of the solid walls that required the magnet strips to be doubled and tripled on top of each other to make the artwork flush on those walls.

Any unforeseen complication requires problem solving, which is a valuable lesson that art class teaches our students. As my students are working on their projects some will accidentally make an incorrect mark with a Sharpie marker, or use the wrong color colored pencil, or press too hard with their graphite pencil. I reassure them that this is a normal part of making art, and I work with them to camouflage it as best as we can or turn it into a happy accident.



My school also has fall and spring art exhibits to celebrate student work.

Looking Forward

As art educators we infuse our experience outside the classroom into everything we teach, which is why it is important for us to keep growing and learning ourselves through professional development and personal projects. I am excited about the opening reception for *10 Summers and 250 Years: Advocating for Our Public Lands through 30 Artist Residencies*, which is scheduled for June. It will be a time to celebrate a decade's worth of work with park visitors and loved ones. I will share the news with my students and be sure to reference the lessons I learned during this project as I move forward in my career. Here is to the creative process, and all the beautiful challenges that it provides. And here is to moving beyond the idea—creating artwork or creating an art exhibit to show creativity.

Dr. Heather Heckel, EdD is an artist/art educator living in New York City and teaching on Long Island. Her award-winning artwork has been shown internationally, is in several national permanent collections and is featured regularly in the Park Slope Reader. She is a lifelong learner who loves to travel, and has been awarded 31 artist residencies through the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. She is in her 13th year of teaching public school art, and has taught at the college, and middle/high school levels. She earned her



BFA in Illustration from the Ringling College of Art and Design, a MAT in Art Education from the School of Visual Arts, an MFA in Painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design, and an EdD in Educational Leadership from the University of the Cumberlands. She lives with her two dozen houseplants and loves going to the movies and traveling domestically and abroad.

Congratulations to Heather on publishing her first book! *10 Summers and 250 Years: Advocating for Our Public Lands through 30 Artist Residencies*, accompanies her solo exhibit described in the preceding article. The independently published book is available from [Amazon](#) in both paperback and hard cover.

It Takes A Village. Or, It Is Ok to Ask For Help

I am an extremely independent person, often to a fault, so this exhibit was good practice in asking for help. Several of my friends generously offered to come over and help me stick adhesive magnet strips to the backs of all my artwork. A friend drove to Manhattan from Philadelphia with his minivan to transport all my artwork to Sandy Hook, New Jersey. This involved several trips up and down my many flights of stairs, carefully carrying matted artwork of varying sizes and the large, heavy aluminum prints. Another friend traveled down to New Jersey with me for a full second day of installing the show. I wrote an accompanying book for the exhibit, and yet another friend volunteered and proofread it.

In the classroom my students sit four to a table. I have them ask each other for help before they ask me and am delighted at the many informed and eloquent responses they have for one another. It often seems easier to see areas of improvement in someone else's work than it is our own, and therefore easier to provide feedback. If a student does not know the answer to something we already reviewed I have them ask a tablemate. I encourage students to interact and rely on each other as much as possible. I also lean on my colleagues when trying something new to hear about their experience and learn best practices.

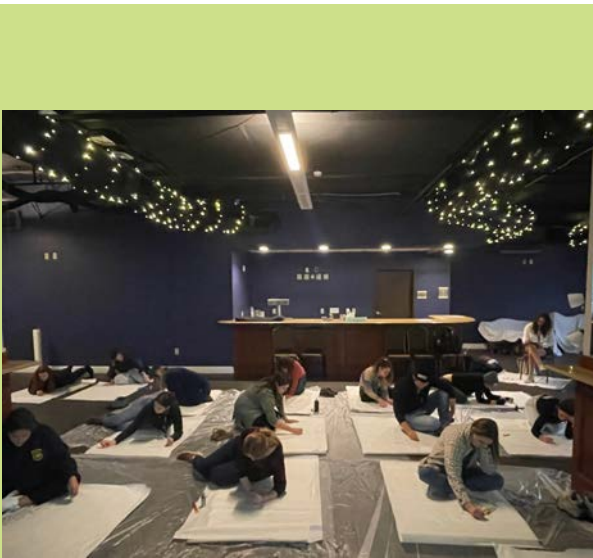
Stop and Smell the Roses

Ultimately, despite all the challenges of creating artwork for and installing such an ambitious exhibit, it all came together in the end. In fact, after all the focused time, attention, and energy, it felt a little anticlimactic. I had to remind myself to pause and fully absorb the accomplishment and practice gratitude for all the support from friends and family as well as the echoes of former professors that helped make this happen.

After each assignment I have my students complete a self-reflective artist statement which always includes prompts asking them to describe their favorite part about the project, and what they are most proud of. They also enjoy seeing their artwork matted and displayed in my classroom, on bulletin boards, and in other display cases around the school.

Fueling Creativity Through Art and Movement

“When participants focused on movement and response rather than judgment, they were more willing to take risks” - Jessica Nash



It seems to me creativity is often misunderstood as something you are either born with or not. In my Fall NYSATA Conference workshop, *Fueling Creativity Through Art and Movement*, I worked with fellow art educators to challenge that belief, not through artmaking alone, but by using movement to become present and facilitate an experience for both “creating”, and “being creative”.

We began by sitting on matboards covered in bulletin board paper for our “brain dump”. We wrote anything on our minds right onto the paper—tasks, worries, ideas, distractions, etc. This step reflects an important truth: before creativity can begin, space must be made for it. It has been proven that clearing mental clutter helps the brain shift into an idea-generating state, improving focus and awareness, therefore making it easier to create.

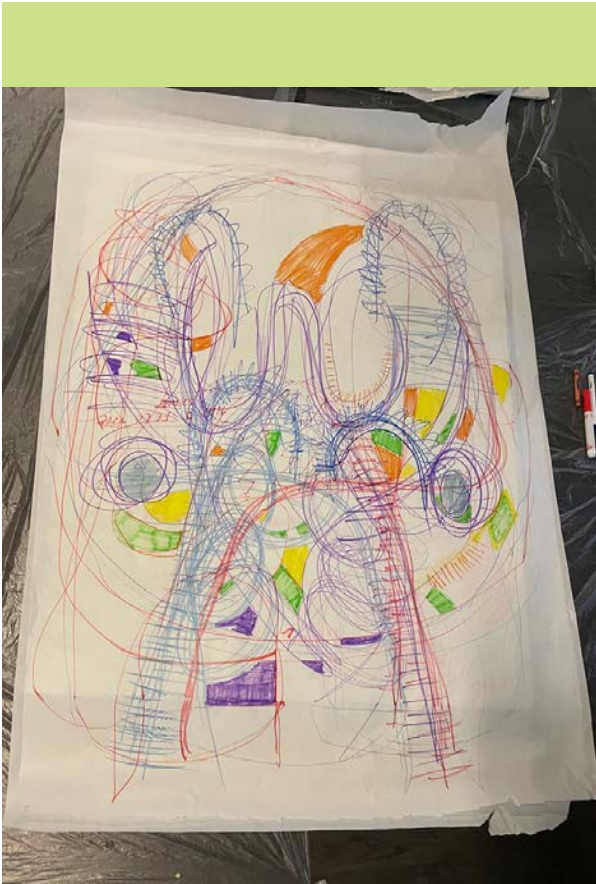
As we wrote, I presented information on the neuroscience of creativity. Research shows that during creative thinking, the brain’s Default Mode Network (DMN), which is linked to daydreaming and mind-wandering, becomes active. This network helps us connect unrelated ideas, which is central to creative thought. Creativity, then, is not random or limited to a few. It is a process that can be activated through intentional strategies to allow one to engage in the process of creating.

Participants were then guided into a movement-based drawing experience. Everyone was given large paper and their choice of materials such as charcoal, markers, and paint pens, which allowed for a variety of expressive marks. Instead of starting with a plan, participants followed guided movements inspired by yoga poses while drawing directly on the surface beneath them.

For example, while seated cross-legged, they drew circular motions around their legs. In a forward fold, they reached forward and back, creating long lines. At times, they used one hand, and at others, both. This shifted the focus from “What should I make?” to “What happens when I move?”. The result was less overthinking and more intuitive mark-making.

This process connects to the work of artist Caroline Denervaud, who describes her practice as a kind of performance. She uses movement to create an initial “trace”, then returns to develop the trace through consideration of composition and the addition of color. By beginning with movement, participants in the NYSATA workshop were able to experience how ideas can emerge after action, not before.





One effective strategy introduced was bilateral drawing, using both hands or the non-dominant hand. This helps bypass habitual thinking and opens new neural pathways, supporting flexibility and expression. For many, this was a turning point where they felt less restricted and more open to exploration.

Lack of confidence and uncertainty are common barriers to creativity. This activity addressed both by removing pressure to produce a “good” result. When participants focused on movement and response rather than judgment, they were more willing to take risks. This mirrors what I aim to build in my classroom, a space where process matters, experimentation is encouraged, and mistakes are part of growth.

After the movement-based drawing, participants returned to their work to “compose” it by adding color, refining shapes, and making intentional choices. This reinforced that creativity involves both spontaneity and structure.

The workshop concluded with reflection. What were you thinking while making certain marks? How did movement influence your ideas? What do you notice now? These questions help learners move beyond initial ideas into deeper, more meaningful work.

This approach aligns with the NYS Portrait of a Graduate, especially in fostering critical thinking, communication, and innovation. Creativity today is not just about producing artwork. It is about generating ideas and persisting through uncertainty.

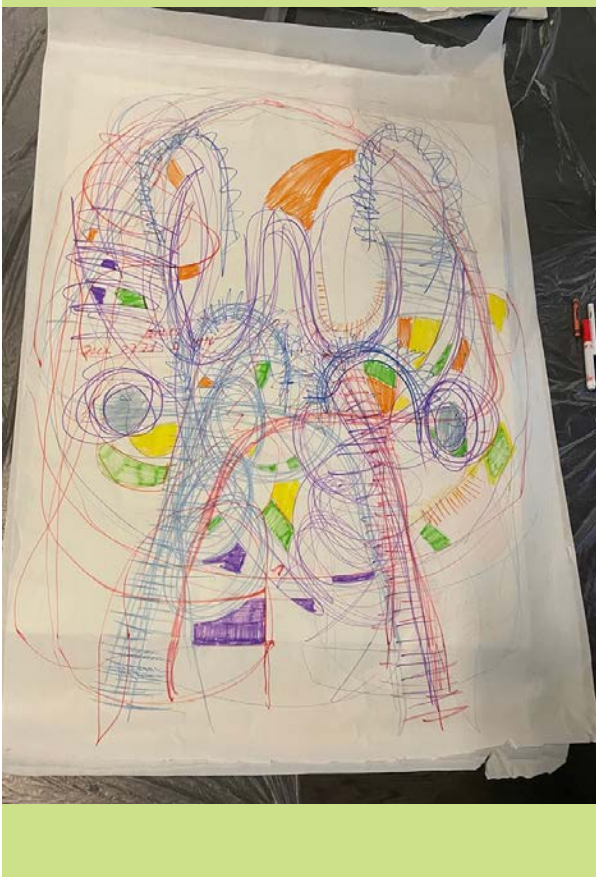
Creativity can be taught. It looks like making space to think, engaging both the body and mind, and providing opportunities to explore and reflect. Most importantly, it means helping learners understand that creativity is not something they either have or do not have, but something they can build through practice.

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Jessica Nash is an art educator at Hendrick Hudson High School where she teaches Studio Art, Advanced Drawing & Painting, AP Art and advises the National Art Honor Society. She is passionate about helping students grow as creative thinkers and often blends artmaking with movement and mindfulness. Jessica is the PR chair for NYSATA Region 7 and enjoys collaborating with other educators to support meaningful art experiences for students.

When Art Speaks: Moving Beyond the Idea

“Artistry takes courage, it takes time to nurture and the ability to foster.” - Jenn Grasso



In every classroom, there is a moment when a student pauses and asks, “Is this good?” Beneath that question is something deeper: *Does this matter? Does this say something?*

As art educators, we are not only teaching students how to generate ideas—we are guiding them toward creating work that speaks, work that matters, and work that extends beyond the classroom.

Ideas are everywhere. They appear in sketchbooks, conversations, and quiet moments of observation. Yet the greatest challenge is not generating ideas, it is helping students move beyond them. Many students believe creativity and artistic talent is something you are either born with or without. This myth can be paralyzing. When students compare themselves to others or doubt their abilities, they hesitate to begin or abandon their work too soon. Artistry takes courage, it takes time to nurture and the ability to foster.

In my classroom, I emphasize that ideas are only the starting point. Creativity is a process that can be nurtured, practiced, and developed over time. We normalize revision, exploration, and even failure. Students engage in low-stakes

brainstorming, quick sketches, material experimentation, and collaborative discussions. By removing the pressure of perfection, they begin to understand that creativity is not about getting it right the first time, it is about staying motivated and engaged long enough to watch something come to fruition and create something meaningful.

To support this growth, I shift the focus from *What are you making?* to *What are you trying to say?* This simple question changes everything. It invites students to think about intention, message, and audience. It helps them position their art not just as a product, but as a form of communication. We practice this through storytelling. I constantly say to them, “*You are a visual storyteller, show me what you want to say.*”

Students create work that reflects their experiences, identities, and communities. Their choices of color, composition, symbols, and materials become part of their visual language. When art begins to speak, it often reveals vulnerability and authenticity. One powerful example of this in action is our recent project we called, Art That Speaks, a collaboration between my 8th grade Studio Art students and the PEACE Projects cultural partner Oya Bangura. Through this work, students created life-size silhouette figures, where each one was embedded with personal storytelling and voice. Students began brainstorming on themes that are going on in society, school, home or within themselves and created mini paper silhouettes and written statements about what they represented. From there, we traced each other in the postures of these poses to create life size silhouettes and embedded the silhouettes with QR codes to share each individual story.

After its debut exhibition at the Islip Arts Council Gallery, the impact was undeniable. The silhouettes and student stories resonated deeply with viewers, creating a space for connection, reflection, and dialogue. The work extended beyond a classroom project, it became a living, breathing example of what happens when students are empowered to speak through their art. That impact continues to grow. The team at Creative Visions Foundation’s Students Rebuild has invited me to present and bring ten student silhouettes for a special event on June 6th in Los Angeles, California amplifying student voices on a global stage and celebrating the power of youth creativity in action.



This work is made possible through the support of PEACE (Partners in Education, Arts & Community Empowerment) an education program of the Patchogue Arts Council, funded by the US Department of Education Assistance for Arts Education. With the goal to “make more equitable and impactful use of the arts for students by reducing barriers and promoting success for all” (<https://www.pacpeaceproject.org>). These grants are essential. They provide the resources, time, and access needed to build meaningful collaborations between artists, educators, and the community. Without this support, opportunities for authentic, culturally connected learning experiences would be limited.

When we create space for reflection, dialogue, and respect, students begin to understand that their voice matters. A classroom where art speaks is a classroom where students feel empowered. It becomes a community where ideas are developed with purpose and where students support one another in taking creative risks. When students move beyond the idea, their work transforms. It becomes more than an assignment, it becomes expression, communication, and connection. And in that moment, we are reminded why creativity matters.

Jenn Grasso is a middle school visual arts educator in Brentwood, NY, with over 20 years of experience amplifying student voice through meaningful artmaking. She is a Creative Visions Foundation Ambassador, NYSATA Region 10 Vice Chair, Co-Chair of NYSATA's ED&I Committee, NAEA New York State ED&I Liaison, and 2025 NYSATA Region 10 Art Educator of the Year. Her work is grounded in culturally responsive-sustaining practices, guiding students to explore identity, storytelling, and connection through art. She collaborates with the Islip Arts Council to exhibit student work, giving them purpose beyond the classroom, including Art That Speaks, with the Patchogue Arts Council's PEACE Project. She partners with the Local Learning Network to bring cultural experiences into her classroom. As an exhibiting photographer, her work explores light, nature, and moments of connection and presence, reflecting her belief in art as a powerful tool for voice and connection.

Art THAT SPEAKS
is GOING TO
CALIFORNIA

A Special Culminating Event with
students REBUILD
powered by **CREATIVE VISIONS**

Hosted at **Homeboy Industries, Los Angeles**

This activation celebrates the impact of the
Students Rebuild: Unique and United Campaign

ART THAT SPEAKS
STUDENT ART EXHIBITION

LIFE-SIZE STUDENT SILHOUETTES

Students from East Middle School in Brentwood present powerful life-size silhouette artworks exploring voice, identity, and community. Through expressive shapes and bold visual statements, these works reveal the **power of art to amplify student voices.**

Sharing My Creative Process As An Elementary Teacher—Letting Our Hearts Lead The Way

“... I feel that the moments in my day when I am being creative or asking my students to be creative are the best times of my day!” - Meri Tomasulo-Pellow

I am excited to think and talk about the topic of creativity. To me, creativity is solving problems, coming up with solutions, doing something in a new way, finding your own path, simply making a decision and taking action, or making something out of nothing. As an elementary art teacher, I love the challenge of being creative and I feel that the moments in my day when I am being creative or asking my students to be creative are the best times of my day. And as it turns out, there is a huge portion of my day that is dedicated to being creative.

For instance, when I am trying to figure out what the next art project will be for my k-3 students, I am being creative. When I look at what famous artists have done, and I am trying to figure out a way that my students can find inspiration and relate to the artist's work, I am being creative. When I choose materials and supplies, I am being creative. When I make my teacher examples, I am being creative. When I decide how to get the supplies to the students at their art tables, I am being creative. When I write the lesson plan and the weekly plan, I am being creative. When I am managing student behaviors, I am being creative. When I am figuring out how clean-up will work, I am being creative. Problem solving and then putting the solution into action shows creativity—creativity is certainly the human experience in the art room!

Recently, I collaborated with my student teacher from Buffalo State University, Ms. Shannon Howe, on an Abstract Landscape art project for second grade. We wanted second grade students to be inspired by the landscape paintings of Etel Adnan. Ms. Howe found a YouTube channel called “ArtJohn” that fantastically outlined the way a teacher and her students could approach this lesson. Using this video as a starting point, my student teacher and I created a lesson for our students.

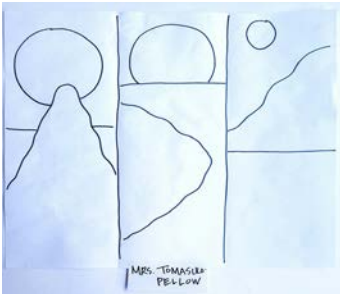
We needed to consider how much information about the artist could be shared, and how much art making could be done, during one week of art class. We see the students for art twice per week for forty minutes each session. We needed to consider what could be accomplished during this amount of work time for a second grader. We wanted them to feel successful and proud of their work. We researched

what medium the artist used, and then considered what was available and appropriate for the second-grade age level and our time constraints. There were a lot of decisions to be made, and I would argue that each decision required a certain degree of creativity. Yes, we “got an idea from” Etel Adnan. And, yes, we “got an idea from” ArtJohn. But there are a lot of changes and adjustments to be made from what the famous artist (Adnan) did and what the famous YouTube teacher (Art John) suggested to do, to what could be accomplished by a not-yet-famous YouTube teacher (me) and art teacher (me), a student art teacher (Ms. Howe), and a class of seven- or eight-year-old artists/students. We needed to modify, translate, and simplify (But I would never use the phrase “dumbing it down”! There is nothing dumb about any of this, or anyone!)

I explained to my student teacher that once the decision is made for the project focus, then I create teacher examples using the supplies and the process that I will later have my students use. Sometimes I stop midway and start over. Sometimes I find that it is taking me too long to do, and therefore my students will never be able to finish it. I try to be aware of and anticipate the questions I think my students might ask or be thinking about along the way. Sometimes I make more than one example and switch up the medium. Most times, I will make a set of teacher examples that show separate steps for the same project. For instance, step 1: draw in pencil; step 2: outline in black sharpie; and step 3: color in. It is amazing how much confusion can be avoided, and time and sanity saved, just by having the steps laid out as visual examples. And the students learn independence and self-reliance! (YAY for social emotional learning practices in action!)

My student teacher and I decided that on Day 1 of the project, students would create three simple landscape drawings on an 8 ½ by 11-inch sheet of copy paper, and then color them in. On Day 2 of the lesson, students would create a collage with torn colored construction paper pieces, glued onto a 6-inch by 9-inch white paper. We then settled on our plan for Day 1: Draw lines (pencil first with optional outline in black) for step 1 and then color in with markers and/or crayons for step 2. My student teacher was going to be





absent, to take her teacher certification exams, so I was responsible for teaching Day 1 of this art lesson. And I was up for the challenge!

After I briefly explained the project, and introduced the artist Etel Adnan's work, students got to work on their drawings. This is where the magic began to unfold. Some students, like Kenzie, "copied" my example, but I see nothing wrong with that. That was their choice. Are they being any less creative? Are they taking the easy way out? Or are they being smart? Are they saving time? Are they doing their best work? Are they challenging themselves at their own appropriate skill and development level? Ultimately, no two art works are going to be exactly alike. We are not computers! I would argue that Kenzie's art looks even better than mine on Day 1 of the project and she has additional decisions to make on Day 2.

Other students, like Grant, Brayden, Kroy, Quinn, and Amir made projects that were very similar to mine, and that is what I generally expect to see from my students. Each one is beautiful in its own way. Still others, like Maveric, Rawan, Layla, and Cara made projects that had more variations from the teacher example but were still within the realm of the project directions and my preconceived expectations. Again, I see beauty and creativity in each piece.

What I did not expect to see was the direction that Eliza took. When I saw her actively drawing what looked like tiny trees in pencil across the top portion of her paper, paper that was turned the WRONG WAY, I almost considered trying to re-direct her. But then I watched how engaged she was with her work. She was fiercely concentrating. She was smiling. I just let her continue her creative journey without interrupting her. I watched as she filled up each of the three sections of her paper with 3 different exquisite landscapes. "This is one of the best pictures I've ever made in my whole life!" Eliza exclaimed. "Yes, it is!" I replied, without hesitation. "Make sure you write your name on your paper," I said hurriedly to the whole class during clean-up time. "I am going to sign my name right in the middle, with a marker," said Eliza. "Oh yes, of course!" I said, feeding off Eliza's infectious enthusiasm (suppressing my ingrained urge to instruct her to write her name on the back in pencil instead, so as not to hinder the aesthetics of the piece). She proudly signed her name in elaborate 8-year-old cursive writing, right smack in the middle of her masterpiece, and handed it in. And then, Eliza strode confidently out of the art room, with her head held high, ready to face the challenges of the rest of her day.

She was so proud of her work. It was not at all what I expected. I was proud of myself for not getting in the way of her creative process. I was aware that something very creative and sacred took place that day. I was teaching the lesson, but yet again, I was learning a lesson from my amazing students. When I had the opportunity to take a look at Eliza's artwork more thoroughly after class, I could see and appreciate the careful attention to detail that she had drawn. She included a fish blowing bubbles in the pond, a little child with her arms wrapped around her legs sitting under a gigantic flower/tree, and a fantastical magical world of creatures, plants, and nature. What would have happened if I had intervened? Would she have felt defeated instead of elated? I fear that this amazing piece of art would never have existed. I do know for sure that her art made me stop, and look, and feel something. And is not that what creating art is all about anyways?



Etel Adnan once said, "Do what your inner soul tells you to do, regardless of any money or success it will bring." I think Eliza was listening to her inner soul as she worked that day. I think my inner soul was telling me not to interfere. And I am so glad that we let our hearts lead the way.

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Meri Tomasulo-Pellow has been an elementary art teacher for the Lancaster Central School District since 1997 and is a YouTube creator for her channel Art Makes Life Meri @ artmakeslifemeri. She loves sharing ideas and lessons and has been a presenter at the NYSATA conventions in Buffalo and



Rochester. She continues to work on her goal of finding the impossible balance between the 3 loves of her life: making art, teaching, and spending time with her family.

Demystifying Creativity

“When teachers frame creativity as an endless resource within the self, we can embolden others to bravely begin creative pursuits.” - Deb Anderson

At our core, all human beings are creative. Do not believe me? Look at some of the oldest known art created by humans during the Paleolithic era: hand stencils blown onto cave walls with saliva and materials from the earth. It does not get more raw than that. And it did not require wealth, power, status, social media followers, or expensive tools to create. So why do so many students and even adults think they are not creative? Or worse, debase art education because they believe they are not artistic? We have all heard those dreaded words, the ones that make every art teacher cringe: “I could never do that. I cannot even draw a stick figure or a straight line!” With patience and encouragement, art educators can change this off-base perspective.

Unless we are encouraged and taught to believe otherwise, most people mistakenly confuse creativity with skill. I see this happen most when people compare their work and level of artistic ability to others without having a clear framework for self-critique. Any idea can be executed creatively, but it is the comparison of one’s skill to others that can make students, and even adults, continue to believe the lie that they lack artistic ability. When teachers frame creativity as an endless resource within the self, we can embolden others to bravely begin creative pursuits. Suddenly, those who do not believe they are creatively inclined will have a safe, tangible entry point into trusting their creative nature.

In discussions with students, I often share that my best teachers reminded us why artwork is called just that; great artists consistently work to develop and refine their skills. Understanding proper use of materials and techniques, close looking, knowledge of artists, art history, and art movements, are all explorations that begin to help creatives understand their craft. Perseverance, persistence, critical thinking, and withholding judgment are the practices that help artists learn how to express themselves fearlessly. Not only are these skills that can last a lifetime, but they are also transferable to other areas of our lives.

I strive to demystify creativity for my students by involving them in conversations about these topics. It is my belief that students need teachers who will help them to recognize that artmaking is innate; it is something that belongs to everyone. Perseverance and consistency ultimately transform and refine skill. When students understand that strong works of art are made of trial and error, practice, determination, and dedication, that is when the magic happens in the art room. And, speaking from experience, when a student starts to believe in themselves, that sense of self confidence can flourish gloriously in other aspects of one’s life. Cultivating creative self confidence in our students opens the door to discovering that the realm of art is not just for the lucky ones, it’s a multi-faceted exploration of the self, accessible to all of us.



Deb Anderson is a High School Drawing and Painting teacher from Delmar, N.Y. She teaches in her hometown at Bethlehem Central High School. Deb holds a B.S. in Art Education from the College of Saint Rose, an M.A. in Art Education from the Art of Education University, and an M.A. in Art Market from FIT. She spent six and a half years working in the NYC art world. Deb has volunteered her time with NYSATA since 2020 in various roles including Secretary, Co-Chair, and BOT Rep. for Region 6. In 2025 she honored as the Region 6 Art Educator of the Year.



Inspiring and Validating Student Creativity by Incorporating Museum Works of Art into Instruction

“There is great value for students when they see the connections between their artwork and those of artists who came years—and sometimes millennia—before them.” - Karen Rosner

To encourage our students' creativity, we often incorporate works by famous artists into our units of study. In this article we will look at two methods of using works of art to inspire our students and to validate their creativity, ensuring that our students follow that creative impulse in all of their artmaking.

The traditional practice of integrating museum works of art into instruction

As illustrated with Figures 1 and 2, often students examine and discuss a work of art, then visually respond, informed by what they observed. Angel's *Picture of Myself* (Fig. 2) was created *after* his art teacher, Lisa Pines, showed her students Pablo Picasso's *Autoportrait* (Fig. 1).

And by noting how Angel went beyond what Picasso painted, by drawing his full body, including those expressive hands, the teacher validates the unique quality of Angel's work, encouraging him to follow his creative instincts as he develops future artworks.

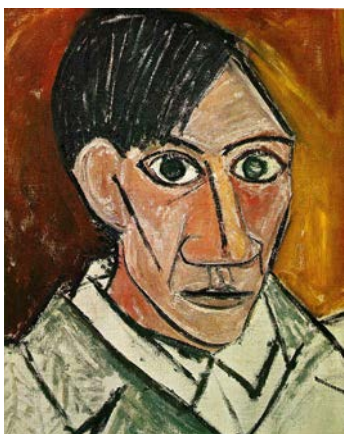


Fig. 1. Pablo Picasso. (1907). *Autoportrait*. [painting]. National Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic. Public domain.



Fig. 2. Angel Grade 2. (2013). *Picture of Myself* [mixed media]. Used with permission from the NYC Department of Education.

Angel wrote:

This is a picture of me. It's a self-portrait. I looked at my face in the mirror. My hair is very black. I painted space and my whole body. I like how my body and my arms fit into the picture. First, I used a pencil and a marker, then I painted with watercolor. I like art class. (Angel, 2013, p.23)

In a conversation with the student, the teacher can note how Picasso's portrait inspired Angel's creativity in the way he deftly incorporated his observations of Picasso's work into his own self-portrait: the tan and pink of the face, the eyebrows defined by simple lines, and the emphasis on his black hair.

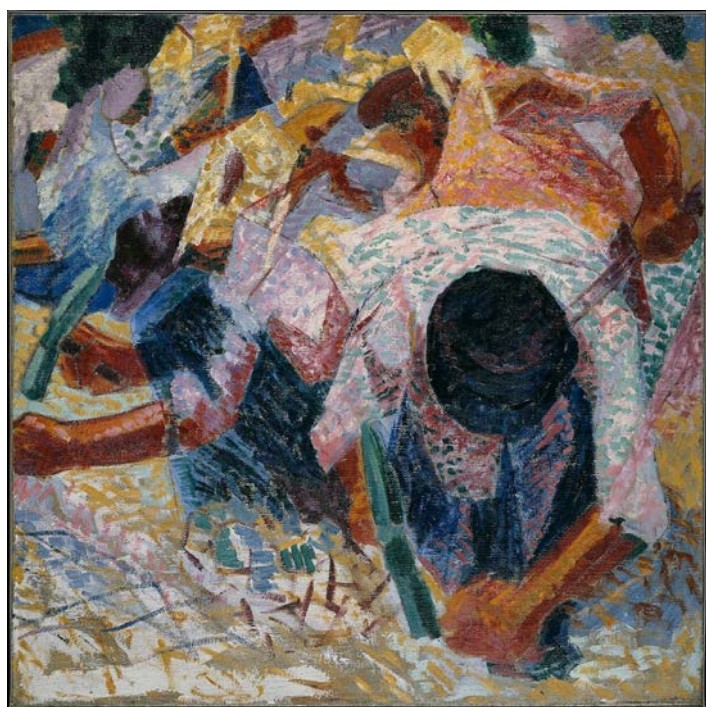


Fig. 3. Umberto Boccioni. (1914). *The Street Pavers*. [painting]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. Public domain.

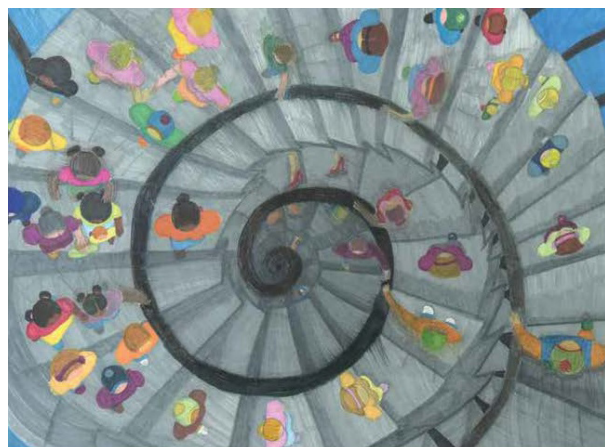


Fig. 4. Lily Grade 8. (2016). *At the Museum* [mixed media]. Used with permission from the NYC Department of Education.

Figures 3 and 4 are another example of the tried-and-true teaching method of having students examine museum works of art as inspiration before they engage in their own artmaking.

Note that in his statement—shared with student, Lily— art teacher, Andrew Hornberger, recognizes that her drawing, *At the Museum* (Fig. 4), demonstrates how she absorbed and was inspired by the work of the Futurists (Fig. 3). At the same time, he recognizes how she found her own way of creating a dramatic sense of movement, thus validating her creativity.

I introduced students to masterworks from Futurist artists...through repetition, a circular composition, and action lines, Lily used a most intriguing contemporary approach to embrace the ideas set forth by artists such as Umberto Boccioni and Giacomo Balla. (Hornberger, 2016, p.60)

Flipping traditional practice

But let us look at the value of having students look at works of art *after* they have done their own work. In this article on developing young artists' creativity, I propose that connecting a student's finished work to those done by other artists can yield added meaning for the student. This approach, as the traditional approach, honors student work and validates their creativity. However, reversing that practice by linking their *finished* work to certain works by known artists helps students realize two things.

1. Their experience creating that specific work of art helps them value the challenges and successes of other artists who dealt with the same subject matter in a similar medium.
2. They have a place in the over 40,000-year continuum of art history that began when people created paintings on the walls of caves.

Realizing the challenges and successes of other artists



Fig. 5. Anlli Grade 7. (2019). *Waterfall*. [painting]. Used with permission from the NYC Department of Education.

Anlli was a student in Karen Thomas-Hubela's art room. Fig. 5 is Anlli's artwork, *Waterfall*. Her *written* reflection provides student insight.

This painting was difficult. I had to redo the rocks to make them look like rocks. I had to be patient and wait for certain parts to dry before I could overlap the next layer. I spent days on this one painting. It took some practice with the fan brush and different

thicknesses of paint to get the water to look like it was flowing over the cliff. (Anlli, 2019, p.70)

If, *after* Anlli finished her landscape, she was shown the work of Pat Steir (Fig. 6), Katsushika Hokusai (Fig. 7) and John Henry Twachtman (Fig. 8), she would understand better than most museum visitors, the successes and the challenges each might have experienced, because she had painted a waterfall herself.



Fig. 6. Pat Steir. (1991). *Curtain Waterfall* [painting]. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Public Domain.



Fig. 7. Katsushika Hokusai. (1833). *Ono Waterfall on the Kisokaido*. [print]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. Public domain.

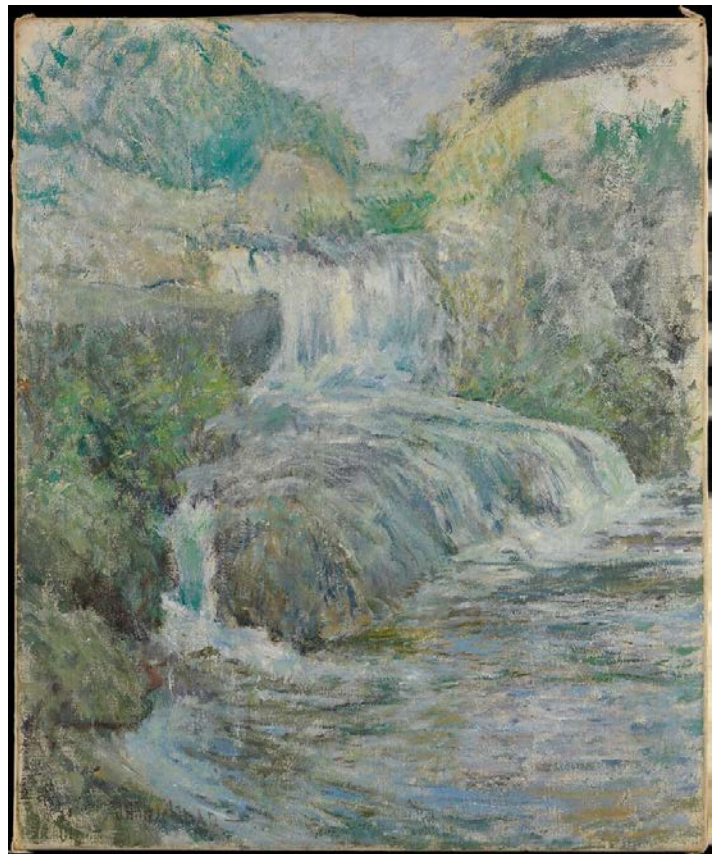


Fig. 8. John Henry Twachtman. (1889-91). *Waterfall*. [painting]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. Public domain.

Realizing students are a part of the artistic continuum

There is great value for students when they see the connections between their artwork and those of artists who came years—and sometimes millennia—before them. It demonstrates that they are part of a history of artists who considered the same technique, medium and/or subject matter.

Third grade artist, Benson's work *Wind* is shown in Fig. 9. Benson wrote of the expressive landscape he created:



Fig. 9. Benson Grade 3. (2023). *Wind* [mixed media]. Used with permission from the NYC Department of Education.

It's windy! Leaves are blowing. It's getting colder. Winter is coming. The leaves are changing colors: red, yellow, orange. I want people to feel the wind when they see my painting. I want them to feel happy. I like art. I like to paint and get messy. Art makes me feel happy. (Benson, 2023, p. 23)

Abstract Expressionist Joan Mitchell (Fig. 10), used bright colors and expressive brushstrokes to describe how they felt about the natural world.



Fig. 10. Joan Mitchell. (1989). *Land*. [painting]. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Public domain.

Students knowing that they are part of the art history continuum is most dramatically illustrated when we consider

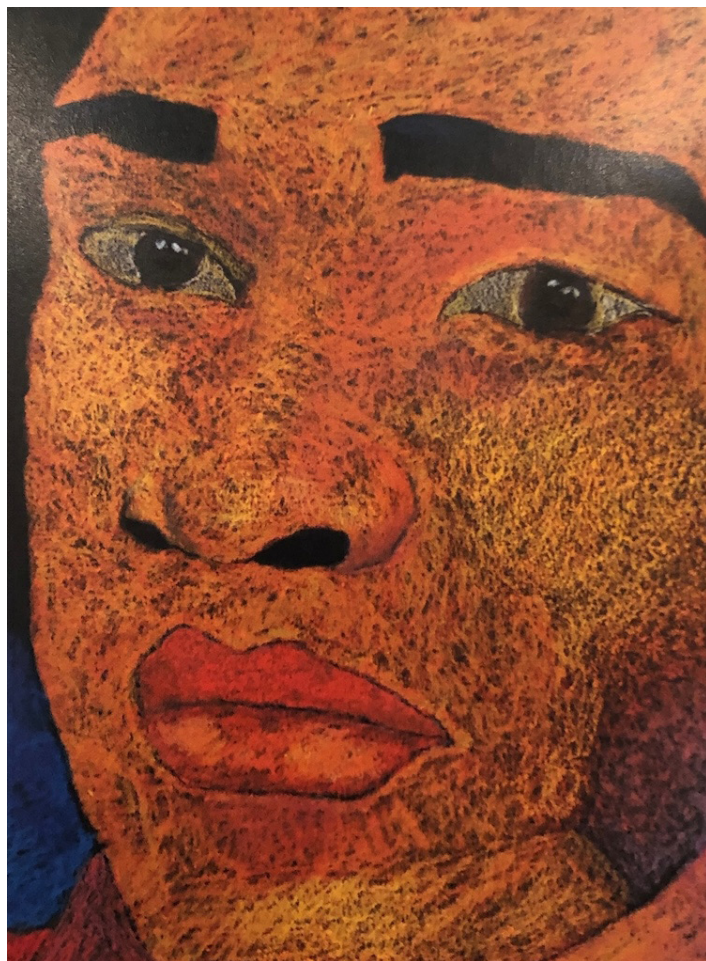


Fig. 11. Wolf Grade 11. (2010). *Self-Portrait* [drawing]. Used with permission from the NYC Department of Education.



Fig. 12. New Kingdom. *Yellow Jasper*. (1390-1336 BC). *Fragment of a Queen's Face*. [sculpture]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. Public domain.

Wolf's *Self-Portrait* in Fig. 11, and what he could discover by comparing his completed work to one of the highlights in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian art collection (Fig.12). He would understand that over 3,000 years ago, half-way around the world, there lived an artist, who although working in a completely different medium, had the same goal as he had: to subtly render the fullness of cheeks, chin, and lips.

Fourth grade artist, Tait, created *Olivia, Olivia, Brush Your Hair*, a colorful, well-composed, and detailed portrait. Note those brush bristles showing through Olivia's hair! (Fig. 13) Imagine her delight if she was shown the work of Hashiguchi Goyo (Fig. 14) and Mary Cassatt (Fig. 15) whose work has similar subject matter. Yet another way to demonstrate to a young artist their place in the history of the art continuum.



Fig. 14. Hashiguchi Goyo. (1920). *Woman Combing Her Hair*. [print]. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH. Public domain.



Fig. 13. Tait Grade 4. (2011). *Olivia, Olivia, Brush Your Hair*. [painting]. Used with permission from the NYC Department of Education.



Fig. 15. Mary Cassatt. (1886). *Girl Arranging Her Hair*. [painting]. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Public domain.

Conclusion

Works of art can be integrated into instruction by using them in mini lessons as inspiration before students create their artwork, or they may be used with students after they have completed a work of art. While both processes can inspire and validate students' creativity, the latter also offers students [1] insights into the challenges and successes of other artists and [2] a view of themselves as part of an artistic continuum.

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Karen Rosner holds a master's degree in art history. She retired in July 2024 from her role as Director of Visual Arts for the New York City Public Schools. In that position, she led citywide professional development for visual arts teachers and created curriculum resources. She supervised the NYC Visual Arts Commencement Exam for seniors, and the annual P.S. Art Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Currently, Karen supervises visual arts student teachers for Hunter College, serves as NYSATA Region 8 Co-Chairperson, and is on the Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian art collection. She created a resource on contemporary women artists for the Making Their Mark Foundation and was a panelist at its March 2026 Forum in Washington, DC. She is working on a picture book in collaboration with the 92nd Street YMHA (92NY).

Five End-of-the-Year Advocacy Strategies to Consider Before Walking Out the Door

Valerie Savage and Samantha Nolte-Yupari, Advocacy Co-Chairs

Summer vacation looms. Amidst the busy end of the school year where you finalize grades, and test every marker, cull the quarter inch oil pastels from the bin, and either cheer or bemoan next year's art budget, advocacy can feel like the farthest thing on your mind. However, you can take time as the school year closes to end on a high note and set yourself up for success for the 2026-27 school year. In this newsletter article we suggest five advocacy strategies to consider about before you exit your classroom for summer vacation:



1. Evaluate student learning: For your own benefit and for next year's students:

Administration and parents know who the effective teachers are in the district. Assuring your place on this list is advocacy. Take the time to be reflective in your practices. Identify lessons that were successful and exceeded your expectations. Be ready to build on these successes while also instituting any needed changes to fill in gaps and to improve learning. Your September self will thank you for the notes you leave yourself now. This is also a time to reflect on how you have highlighted student learning via assessment. Make sure students are aware of their own learning and can express their growth to others. Your own teaching practice comes full circle in June allowing you to highlight your curriculum using a key language structure valued by administrators ([Embracing Assessment as Advocacy](#)).

2. Final pushout of newsletter, social media, school website posts: Since the art show is a major advocacy effort on its own, our other communication efforts often fall by the wayside in late spring. But the end of the school year is a moment to come full circle and ensure that you have documentation of the show, the accomplishments, the awards and the acceptances that often come with Art Show season. Take a moment to make one final push in the arena preferred by you and your district—be it the school website or social media account, your art program newsletter, etc. The final photos, kudos, and thank yous build support within your school community—especially with parents and principals. One or two highly visible efforts can make a big difference (not to mention can overlap and coincide with your end-of-year self-evaluation and reflections or updates to your own portfolios/websites).

3. Community Support-Budget: Each year we monitor the budget process as it is prepared, proposed, and voted on. While the budget does not provide a full picture of the support for the arts in your community it does provide insight into the financial health of the district and the district's priorities. By reflecting on the budget process and the outcome, you can identify ways to strengthen community support for the arts. Highlighting artistic success in community newspapers, pennysavers, community social media pages, local coffee shops, and community libraries extend the success and importance of the art program in your district beyond school walls. Also consider community needs. Community-engaged learning and service opportunities provide students to build empathy, interpersonal, and socio-emotional communication skills while also making art visible outside of the classroom. (For guidance on setting boundaries when extending out to the community refer to [When Saying No is Advocacy](#).)

4. Committees and leadership for school/district initiatives for next year: District initiatives, leadership positions, and committee work are often decided or formed at the end of the year and/or over the summer. This work is often based upon stakeholder and state initiatives. What occurs each spring partially determines your teaching load and your budget—due to program outcomes and how you intersect with them to create program visibility. Initiatives, working groups, and committees present leadership opportunities for you as a teacher but also assure that the voice of visual arts

is heard and represented. So often we bemoan, “but they just don’t understand what we do!” But how can they if we do not teach stakeholders and constituents about what we do and make our voices heard beyond our classroom walls? A current example is *Portrait of a Graduate*. As part of *New York Inspires*, *Portrait of a Graduate* seeks to transform education in New York State by focusing holistically on six key attributes: Academic Preparation, Creative Innovation, Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Global Citizenry, and Reflective and Future Focused Mindsets. Will you be part of this work? Take time to learn and engage in conversations in your district plans. The following resources will be helpful:



- NY Inspires,
- Portrait of a Graduate
- PLAN Pilot,
- NYS Portrait of a Graduate & Inquiry-Based Learning in PreK–Grade 5 hybrid webinar and
- NYS’s Educational Assessment Strategy

5. Revitalize your own art practice: Before you close the door to this school year, set a personal art goal for the summer. Personal obligations may mean this is a small goal, one 4” x 6” inch sketch a week, experimenting with a new media, or participation in a local plein air art experience. Keep in mind that “putting your toes in the grass” so to speak, and new art experiences, that allow you to seek out art and conversation revitalize your practice. Improve your ability and strengthen your advocacy efforts by being an active participant as an artist. Be ready to share your experiences with your students in the fall.

Even though the sunshine beckons and the end of the school year is a uniquely exhausting time, end this school year with the knowledge that you are an advocate through your strong teaching, community building, leadership, and example. Before you shift focus and mindset, implement these strategies and walk out the door with the knowledge that you have already started your advocacy efforts for the next school year.

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Call for Book Reviews

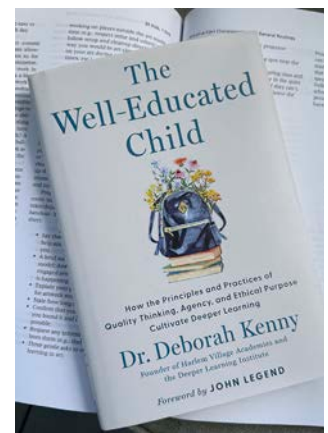
Editors of the *NYSATA News* invite members to contribute book reviews for upcoming editions. Whether you read for pleasure, seek inspiration, or aim to enhance your instructional practice, we welcome your reviews of education and art themed books. These selections can be fiction or nonfiction, ranging from relaxing, enjoyable reads to challenging, educational works.

Guidelines for Submitting Reviews

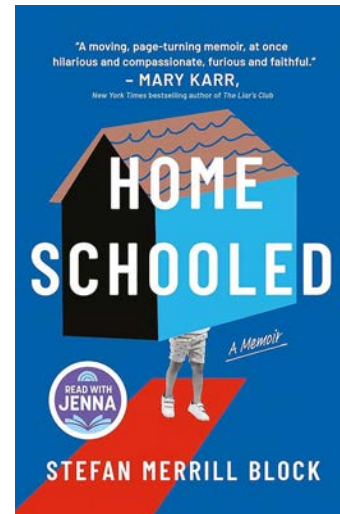
When writing your review, begin by explaining why you chose the book. Provide a brief description of the book’s theme and share your thoughts on why others might benefit from or enjoy reading your selection.

Submission Details

- Book reviews should be concise and easy to read, staying under 300 words.
- Include a photo of the book in .JPG format, at least 5 x 7 inches.
- Send your review to nysatanews@nysata.org.
- The deadline for submissions is Aug 10, but early submissions are encouraged.
- Selected reviews will be published in the fall edition of the *NYSATA News*.



Book Review



There Is No Place for Us: Working and Homeless in America by Brian Goldstone

Homeschooled by Stefan Merrill Block

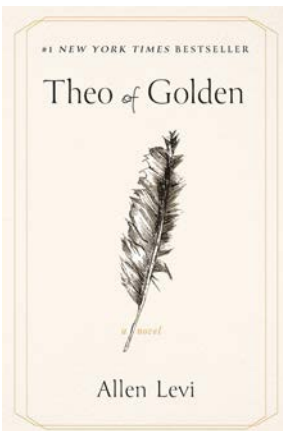
I recently read two books about home life. *There Is No Place for Us: Working and Homeless in America* by Brian Goldstone was recommended on the 100 Notable Books of 2025 list by the staff of *The New York Times Book Review* and *Homeschooled* by Stefan Merrill Block was recommended by *The Week* magazine for books to read in 2026.

There Is No Place for Us is a nonfiction book that follows five working families with children in Atlanta that are currently dealing with varying degrees of homelessness. This reporting documents how just one medical event, car accident, or employment hiccup can make the difference between being able to afford a place to live or not. This leads to sleeping in cars, temporarily staying in packed quarters with family or friends, or living in extended stay hotels. The statistics astounded me, that since these populations are often not counted as truly homeless, it is a much larger issue in our country than we know. I was most shocked to learn how many children are caught up in this whirlwind of insecure housing.

Conversely, *Homeschooled* is the memoir of one boy who was taken out of his Texas public school in fourth grade to spend five years at home in an affluent Plano suburb alone with his mother. She was not qualified to homeschool him. He spent his days aimlessly "pursuing his passions" but was not receiving an adequate education or experiencing the social and emotional growth that happens alongside peers. He eventually attended public high school, and we learn how his experience shaped his life.

I think others would benefit from reading both books since they deepen our knowledge, inspire self-reflection, and increase our empathy. There are common themes, such as parents clearly wanting what is best for their children, whether that may be misguided in the case of *Homeschooled*, or completely out of their control as is evidenced in *There Is No Place for Us*. Coming to school provides a consistent presence, especially for those students who are experiencing a tumultuous home life.

- Reviewed by Heather Heckel



Theo of Golden by Allen Levi

Do not read this book—listen to it in its entirety!

In recent months, I took the advice of my wise friend Beth Atkinson and began listening to books on Audible/Libby while I drive, cook, clean, make art, or waste time cleaning my studio—a total lost cause. It has made the drive to and from work exceptionally more enjoyable.

Theo of Golden, from the very first sentence, captures the reader and takes your mind hostage! If I could describe the book in one word, it would be “charming.” At the core is a gentle old soul Portuguese visitor, a small southern town, and a community unaware of their connectedness.

Without spoiling any of the story, it begins with a coffee shop, and a display of pencil-rendered portraits of the town’s inhabitants. The story winds through the lives of an artist, a bookstore owner, a homeless woman, a college music student, a little girl, and many more endearing people who you learn about through the interaction with this visitor.

There is always a sense of mystery behind this visitor. While little snippets of his past are revealed to the reader...you are kept wondering “why here?”, “why now?”, and “for how long?” In my mind, I kept thinking that this would be a wonderful book to listen to with my class. In fact, I think it should be required reading. The story takes us meandering through hardships, misconceptions, and life lessons. It puts a mirror up to our values. And while this story lilt through the past and present of ordinary people, it brings to light the very humanity we are all looking for these days.

I will caution you that this book will necessitate the need for a box of tissues. It will solicit strange looks from fellow drivers from your laughter at times. But above all, it reminded me how important the Arts are in our lives and how what I am doing as an educator may be a lifeline to one of my students today, tomorrow, or far into their future. I absolutely love this book, and I hope you will too!

- Reviewed by Michelle Schroeder

Book Study Opportunity:

Open to all NYSATA Members organized by Region 3

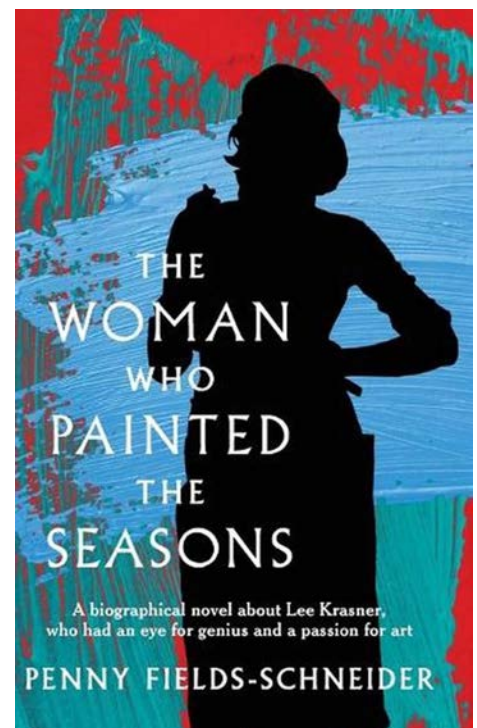
The Woman Who Painted The Seasons

by Penny Fields-Schneider

Region 3 is once again hosting a free summer book study for all NYSATA members. The book we will be exploring is *The Woman Who Painted The Seasons*. Written as Biographical Fiction, the book explores the life of Lee Krasner, “who had an eye for genius and a passion for art”. Participants will need to obtain a copy of the book—library borrowing, audiobooks, or sharing with fellow art teachers are all great options.

Each week, prompts will be given to guide online discussions among members. An option to earn 4 CTLE hours will be available for those who attend. To receive the CTLE hours, participants must complete a book review overview in addition to engaging in the online discussions.

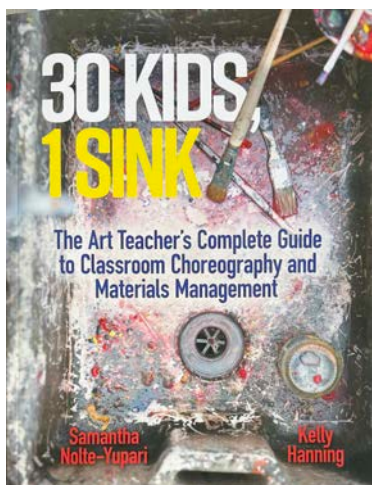
Registration will be available on the NYSATA Region 3 webpage <https://www.nysata.org/region-3-central>. We hope you will join us for an enjoyable experience and a fantastic book!



A review for this book can be found in the *NYSATA News* (55, 2), 27.

Creativity and Classroom Choreography: A Conversation about *30 Kids, 1 Sink* With Dr. Samantha Nolte-Yupari and Kelly Hanning

Submitted by Valerie Savage, NYSATA News Editor



On March 12, 2026, Region 2 hosted a book release party for local authors Dr. Samantha Nolte-Yupari and Kelly Hanning. The celebration was in honor of the publication of their co-authored book *30 Kids, 1 Sink: The Art Teacher's Complete Guide to Classroom Choreography and Materials Management* through Teachers College Press. Dr. Samantha Nolte-Yupari, Professor and Program Director of Art

Education at Nazareth University, joined Naz and Region 2 in 2014 when she was granted responsibility for the Nazareth Art Education program. She is the 2023 Region 2 Art Educator of the Year. Kelly Hanning is a high school teacher and an advisor for the Independent Arts Assessment Pathway in the Gates Chili School District. Kelly is also an adjunct Professor at Nazareth University and the 2022 Region 2 Art Educator of the Year. Region 2 art teachers enjoyed a hot cocoa bar and the raffling of a free copy of the book.

Below is a brief discussion with Kelly and Samantha regarding the creation and writing of *30 Kids, 1 Sink: The Art Teacher's Complete Guide to Classroom Choreography and Materials Management*.

Kelly: "WOW, our book *30 Kids, 1 Sink* is out. It's been a long road from the moment you invited me to write this with you to now, and even longer road from when you wrote the first draft."

Samantha: "It has been a long road! It's so exciting. I wrote the first draft back in my master's program when I was in the Preparing Future Faculty program at VCU. I was co-teaching a secondary methods class and tasked with doing a lesson on demonstrations and finding some classroom management resources for the art teachers in the class. Except, I couldn't find anything specifically for art teachers. My professor said that means there's a need for a

book, and maybe I should think about writing it. I didn't think I could ever write a book, but with that seed planted I wrote a draft within the next month and did my first conference presentation on demonstrations a year later in 2011 at NAEA. By the time I started at Naz in 2014 I had presented again at NAEA and been invited for guest workshops at Mercyhurst University and Penn State."

Kelly: "That makes sense because you were already teaching the early versions of our chapters on demonstrations, visuals, and choreography of routines when I was a student in the program getting my initial certification. I remember teaching Saturday Art and wondering why students needed so much redirection when putting artwork on the drying rack. I did not know why this part of class seemed chaotic until we learned that every routine needs a distinct beginning, middle, and end which are explicitly taught with corresponding choreography. After that, the cleanup routine became much smoother. It felt like magic the first time I really incorporated this thought process into teaching routines in my art studio."

Samantha: "I remember that day when I observed the routine running so well! And when I invited you to co-teach in the program, ultimately solo teaching the Saturday Art courses, it was because I knew you had applied those lessons and could both teach and expand upon them. It was after COVID when I came in to visit your class and you had added some wonderful layers concurrent, at the time, with the new Socio-Emotional benchmarks, I remember thinking, 'Ah, there it is—the extra voice I need; the balance of styles and voices, pre-service education, and in-service insight.' And I think that really raises the question, 'Why now?' What makes *30 Kids, 1 Sink* useful for the support of curricular creativity right now, in the current educational environment?"

Kelly: "Well, as we both intrinsically know, we've seen major changes socially and culturally in our classrooms since COVID. After years of learning from home and minimal social interaction, I found that many of my students needed additional social emotional support. We need to stay proactive about responding to disruptive behaviors and maintaining a space in which students feel intrinsic motivation to make positive choices while in the art studio not only for themselves, but for the art community. Investing

this time allows for more instructional and art making time later on, because I found I spend less and less time on reactionary management.”

Samantha: “That’s a good point; I also think there’s a curricular element that we’ve talked about in other moments regarding the relationship between “management” and teaching along a choice continuum in the art room. You know one of the things I think we hear when teachers are contemplating choice like TAB, and certainly something I remember thinking about was, ‘Choice? Are you nuts?’ Every time I had a “free draw” day, things were crazy and community and behavior went out the window...so why would I want to do choice-based art making? But that’s because many perceive experimenting early along the choice continuum also means leaving young artists entirely to their own devices and that’s simply not true. Classroom choreography looks different along the choice continuum because management isn’t about following closed-ended instructions or compliance, it’s about cultivating collaborative, functioning studio environments where students take personal responsibility for the active engagement with the studio and their own ideas.

Kelly: “Yeah, I think that’s what always strikes me—this movement-focused idea of choreography, acknowledging how active kids are and how much you have to think beyond materials to a community of movers. That can be so hard to learn if you haven’t been a dancer (like you), or an athlete or a server, because our personal art practices are a solo experience. We so often forget how embodied studio life is.”

Samantha: “mmmm...yes...and I think that’s what I love about the expanded curricular work that you did on the art show in chapter 13. That was a really powerful perspective that you brought to the book—seeing the art show so prominently supported in the standards, groaning at the extra work it takes to put on the art show, and absolutely believing the kids should be helping with the show. Your approach to putting on a visually cohesive and organized series of displays that the kids loaded themselves as an active 4–5-week unit. That’s not only good curriculum, it’s good advocacy, and supports students later in their art careers. Fear and discomfort at matting, framing, and loading shows as an adult is something we see all of the time in undergraduates because their art teachers always did it for them and they still expect them too (unconsciously). That message has been implicit their whole lives. And that’s what I love about teaching along the choice curriculum, we move the power and the creativity from our hands into the kids’ hands. The more we do that, the more we empower them and see them thrive as artists...”

Kelly: “...and that’s the sweet spot of our approach to routines. The routines we choreograph reduce decision fatigue on our part and for the kids, and increase emotional safety on all of these other fronts so that in the spaces where

creativity is going to thrive—in kids’ artmaking— there’s room for decisions, ideas, play, risk taking, and Stretch & Explore (Hogan et al., 2018) in the best ways possible.”

Congratulations to Samantha and Kelly on their success in writing and having their book published. We look forward to seeing how their work impacts both future and veteran art educators.

30 Kids, 1 Sink: The Art Teacher’s Complete Guide to Classroom Choreography and Materials Management is now available on Amazon and at Teachers College Press. You can also visit their website www.30kids1sink.com for more information.



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Credit L. Lewandowski for photos Kelly signing and Sam and Kelly.

Creativity—from an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Lens

Jenn Grasso-Moise, ED&I Co-Chair

“Creativity takes courage.”—Henri Matisse

In art education, we often celebrate the spark! We start with the brainstorm and the sketch to get to the big idea but from an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion lens, creativity must move beyond inspiration. It must move into access, belonging, and safety.

Creativity cannot flourish in spaces where students feel unseen or unheard. Before students can take artistic risks, they must feel emotionally safe. They must acknowledge, know, and understand their identity. Children must learn that their racial, cultural, linguistic, gendered, neurodiverse identity is not just tolerated but valued. When we create classrooms rooted in dignity and mutual respect, we lay the foundation for authentic creative work. Students flourish in environments where they feel at ease and thinking about their emotional safety is not at the forefront of their minds. Environments where worrying about their physical attributes do not cloud their thoughts and they can naturally focus on being in the present moment without judgement.

Too often, traditional art instruction reinforces narrow standards of excellence rooted in Eurocentric narratives. An ED&I approach expands the canon of depth. It introduces students to artists across cultures, disciplines, and lived experiences. It affirms that creativity is not singular it is plural. This shift in narrative gives focus to the current times and the freedoms to explore what is more relevant to them presently while still exploring histories. Comparison now becomes a part of the learning experience and not a stage for self judgement and irrelevance.

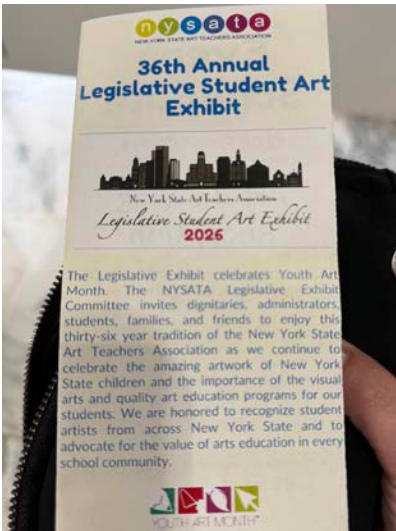
Access is also critical. Creativity cannot move beyond the idea if students lack equitable entry points. This means providing multiple modes of engagement such as visual, verbal, tactile, and digital. It means differentiating instruction so that language learners, students with disabilities, and those navigating trauma have pathways into the work. It means recognizing that silence, hesitation, or resistance may be rooted in lived experience, not a lack of ability. Classroom rigor is then redefined as depth of thinking rather than perfection of product.

When students revise, simplify, question, and reflect, they are engaging in meaningful creative practice. When they analyze their own symbolism or challenge their own assumptions, they are building critical consciousness. Creativity becomes a vehicle for self-understanding and social awareness. Our mission as visual arts educators then becomes a tool for self-discovery and social acceptance.

Safety also lives in process. We normalize critique as dialogue, not judgment. We teach students how to offer feedback with empathy and how to receive it without shame. We grant them the comfort to speak up, share their thoughts, free of fear, void of validation. This environment cultivates trust. When students trust one another, when students find comfortable surroundings, they are more willing to experiment, explore, take risks, and be more authentic with themselves and what they create. We want our students to be willing to tell the truth in their work. This helps the view, the student, and the world around them. We want their message to have meaning, tell a story, and connect humans through a visual language.

Celebrating Student Voices: A Look Back at the 2026 NYS Legislative Exhibit

Patti Krakoff, Legislative Exhibit Committee Member



Every year, the NYS Legislative Exhibit reminds us of something we already know deep in our hearts as art educators: student work has the power to stop people in their tracks, spark conversation, and change minds. This year's exhibit, running May 15-22 at the Legislative Office Building in Albany, was no exception.

NYSATA's Legislative Exhibit is the flagship event for Youth Art Month and the organization's largest public display of student artwork in a government building, co-sponsored by New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). Founded in 1990, the exhibit has provided an exciting opportunity for students and their families to connect with their legislators each spring. This year carried on that proud tradition beautifully.

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to every art educator across New York State who made participation possible. Your dedication, your encouragement, and the countless hours you invest in your students do not go unnoticed. You made this moment happen, and your students rose to it brilliantly.

One of the most powerful aspects of the Legislative Exhibit is what happens when student artists step into the Legislative Office Building and become advocates for themselves and for arts education. Families were able to pre-arrange meet-and-greets with their local Assemblymember and Senator, which included photo sessions, office tours, and written correspondence with their legislators. These are not small moments. When a student stands in a government hallway, points to their own work on the wall, and explains to a legislator why art matters in their life, that message lands in a way that no policy brief ever could.

The opening reception on Tuesday, May 19 brought students, families, and teachers together on the 3rd Floor Terrace Level for art viewing, catered food, and time to meet legislators, followed by a presentation and proclamation ceremony. Every student entrant received a Certificate of Participation from NYSATA and a copy of the Legislative Student Art Exhibit brochure as a tangible reminder that their voice and their work were celebrated at the highest level of state government.

These students are ambassadors, not just for their own artwork, but for art education across all of New York State.

If the spirit of the Legislative Exhibit resonates with you, we would love to have you join us in the broader work of Youth Art Month programming here in New York State. Whether you are a seasoned advocate or simply someone who believes passionately in celebrating student artists, there is a place for you at the table. Reach out to us and we will include you in our next virtual meeting, where you can learn more about how YAM programming works and how you can contribute. We are always looking for passionate educators who want to help us celebrate art and amplify student voices across the state.

Because when we come together, our students shine even brighter.

To get involved, contact yam@nysata.org

We would love to hear from you!

Link to website with current virtual display and more information: <https://www.nysata.org/legislative-exhibit>



NYSSBA Exhibit

2026 VIRTUAL EDITION

Submission Deadline June 30, 2026 • Opens October 22, 2026

Call for Student Artwork

**Registration for this Virtual Exhibit is FREE
and available only to NYSATA Members**

The NYSATA sponsored 2026 New York State School Board Association (NYSSBA) show is now open for submissions. Registration for this show is free to all members of NYSATA. Please take extra care when submitting your work. All links must be shared and the directions for each slide must be followed to allow all student work to be included.

Registration: Online, FREE and available only to current NYSATA Members

Registration Deadline: June 30, 2026

Number of Entries: Up to three student artworks per teacher

To enter your student artwork. Visit www.nysata.org/nyssba-exhibit

NYSSBA promotes the display of student artwork on a statewide platform and is an easy link to share with student families, administration, colleagues and friends.

This exhibit contributes to eligibility for the NYSATA VISION Endorsement



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CREATIVITY IN ACTION: The NYSATA Portfolio Project 2.0



Matt Wilson, Portfolio Project Co-Chair

How does one move past the creativity in ideas into the creativity in action? A simple, well outlined and goal-oriented solution is to turn those ideas into a state-judged portfolio!

The NYSATA Portfolio project is just that. The portfolio project is an authentic avenue to organize your creative endeavors into action. At its core, a strong portfolio reveals **idea development**. Process artifacts like early sketches, thumbnails, or concept explorations show how a student generates and refines ideas over time. This progression illustrates creative problem-solving—how initial concepts evolve in response to challenges, feedback, or new inspiration. Viewers can see that creativity is not accidental; it is iterative and intentional.

Portfolios also highlight **risk-taking** and **experimentation**. When students include a range of media, techniques, and subject matter, it signals a willingness to explore beyond comfort zones. Whether moving from traditional drawing to digital work, or experimenting with abstraction after realism, these shifts demonstrate adaptability and intellectual curiosity—key markers of authentic creative practice.

Another critical component is **process documentation**. Photos of works-in-progress, planning sheets, and revisions provide evidence of decision-making. This transparency allows adjudicators to understand the student's workflow: how they troubleshoot, revise compositions, and push ideas further. Creativity becomes visible as a sequence of informed choices rather than a single outcome.

Equally important is **reflection**. Written artist statements or reflections contextualize the work, articulating intent, influences, and personal meaning. When students analyze their successes and shortcomings, they demonstrate metacognition—thinking about their own thinking—which is a hallmark of mature creative development.

Finally, a portfolio showcases **growth over time**. By including earlier and more recent works, students can demonstrate increasing technical skill, conceptual depth, and confidence in their voice. This longitudinal view reinforces that creativity is not static but develops through practice, critique, and persistence.

The NYSATA Portfolio Project showcases creativity in action by making the invisible visible: ideation, experimentation, revision, and reflection. It transforms creativity from a vague trait or idea into a documented, assessable process grounded in evidence.

Join the movement and check out our state regional sites at www.nysata.org/portfolio-project

Retiree Spotlight: Kathleen Pfeifer

Kathleen Hallam-Bushek, Retiree Committee Co-Chair



Slow down Route 8
Watercolor
2026

Kathleen Pfeifer retired in June of 2018 from the Norwich City Schools. She served for 37 years as an elementary art teacher, art department chair, and vice president of the teacher's union. Her career was long and enriching.

Now Kathleen Pfeifer enjoys building her artistic voice as a watercolor/mixed media artist. Every day she creates new pieces or percolates over older pieces that just seem to need more. Kathleen stated, "Retirement has afforded me the time to focus on discovery and development, especially in watercolor. While staying connected to the artistic community through shows, workshops, and service roles."

Her motivation for her work is connected to teaching and a passion for learning. "For many years," asserted Kathleen, "I encouraged creativity in elementary students while also supporting larger conversations about art education." She contributed at the state level with NYSED in developing the latest version of NYS Visual Art Standards and also served on the NYSED CAP committee. Kathleen believes this involvement deepened her understanding of how art education connects to artistic growth and community impact.



Since retiring, Kathleen has found a new, flexible rhythm that is also purpose driven. She thrives in creative growth and sharing her ability through arts-related leadership and teaching-related work. She continues in service and leadership as the corresponding secretary for the Central New York Watercolor Society and as corresponding secretary/newsletter editor for the Retired Educators of New York, the Chenango Chapter. Kathleen also maintains professional teaching involvement as a supervising teacher/adjunct instructor with SUNY New Paltz. Although retired from her classroom, she has made a concerted effort to stay engaged professionally and creatively. She has continued involvement in NYSATA serving on the BOT as Region 4 Southern Co-Chair and Elections Coordinator, as well as presenting workshops at the annual NYSATA Conference.

Kathleen stated, "Continued involvement in NYSATA means a great deal to me because it keeps me connected to a community that values art education, professional growth, and meaningful collaboration. It also gives me a way to contribute beyond the classroom—supporting leadership, strengthening participation in the region, and helping ensure that the organization continues to thrive."

Kathleen's work was recently in the 75th Central Adirondack Art Show held at the View Arts Center in Old Forge, New York. Other recent exhibits include the Central New York Watercolor Society Signature Show also at the View Arts Center, and a show at the corporate headquarters of NBT Bank in Norwich, New York. Her work will also be in an upcoming Central New York Watercolor Society juried show at LeMoyne College.



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NYSATA VISION Endorsement: Building Momentum and Celebrating Excellence



Janis Boremski and Lisa Federici, VISION Endorsement Chairs

Following the successful launch of the NYSATA VISION Endorsement, the energy surrounding this initiative continues to grow across New York State. What began as a new advocacy effort has quickly developed into a meaningful platform for recognizing, supporting, and elevating visual arts programs in diverse educational settings.

In its inaugural year, the VISION Endorsement drew an impressive 67 applicants from across the state, representing a wide range of districts and school communities. This strong participation underscores a shared commitment among art educators to elevate the visibility and value of visual arts education and participation in NYSATA programming.

As the jurying process concluded, it became clear that the strength of this initiative lies not only in the number of applicants, but in the depth and thoughtfulness of the submissions. Volunteer reviewers from each NYSATA region engaged in a collaborative evaluation process, bringing professional expertise and regional perspective to every application. This peer-driven model ensured that programs were considered within their unique contexts, honoring the individuality of each district while upholding shared standards of excellence.

NYSATA is proud to recognize the following districts as recipients of the **Community of Excellence in Visual Arts (CEVA) Endorsement:**

Babylon UFSD
Brentwood UFSD
Chenango Valley Central School District
East Rockaway UFSD
Fonda-Fultonville Central School District
Fredonia Central School District
Hempstead Public Schools
Herkimer Central School District
Hewlett-Woodmere UFSD
Hicksville Public Schools
Homer Central School District
Iroquois Central School District
Locust Valley Central School District
Mattituck-Cutchogue UFSD
Mineola UFSD
North Colonie Central School District
Oyster Bay-East Norwich Central School District

Plainview–Old Bethpage Central School District
Port Chester–Rye UFSD
Port Washington UFSD
Spackenkill Union Free School District
Suffern Central School District
Troy City School District
Tuckahoe Common School District
Valley Stream UFSD 13
William Floyd UFSD

In addition, NYSATA proudly recognizes the following schools as recipients of the **School of Excellence in Visual Arts (SEVA) Endorsement:**

Akron High School / Akron Central School District
Boulevard Elementary School / Gloversville Enlarged School District
Edward J. Arthur Elementary School / Coxsackie-Athens Central School District
Syracuse Academy of Science Elementary School
The Wheatley School / East Williston School District

These endorsed programs exemplify a strong commitment to access, instructional quality, and alignment with the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts. Across submissions, several key themes emerged, including innovative instructional

practices, interdisciplinary connections, and a dedication to ensuring that all students have meaningful opportunities to engage in the visual arts while participating in NYSATA programs.

Equally significant was the emphasis on advocacy. Applicants articulated not only what their programs currently offer, but also how they communicate their value to stakeholders. From community partnerships to student exhibitions and public-facing events, districts are actively working to make learning visible and to position the arts as an essential component of a well-rounded education.

For many participants, the application process itself proved to be a powerful professional exercise. Reflecting on program strengths, gathering evidence, and aligning practices with standards provided valuable opportunities for growth and dialogue within districts. The VISION Endorsement has already begun to serve as a meaningful tool for these conversations, offering both recognition and a framework for continued development.

Looking ahead, NYSATA is committed to refining and expanding the VISION Endorsement in future cycles. Feedback from applicants and reviewers will guide enhancements to ensure clarity, accessibility, and continued relevance. Plans are also underway to celebrate endorsed districts and schools more broadly, sharing their stories as models of excellence and advocacy in action.

The inaugural year of the VISION Endorsement affirms what NYSATA members have long championed: that visual arts education is essential, impactful, and deserving of recognition. The collective participation of 67 applicants reflects a unified commitment to ensuring that all students across New York State have access to high-quality, meaningful visual arts experiences.

As momentum continues to build, the VISION Endorsement stands as both a celebration and a call to action—inviting all districts to reflect, advocate, and invest in the future of visual arts education. Stay tuned for the 2026 VISION Endorsement, with an updated slide template and a more stream-lined submission process.

Applications open November 2026 • Applications close January 2027
2026 VISION Award Endorsements & PR Toolkits are released in March 2027

Be sure to document all of the wonderful ways your school or district exemplifies excellence in the visual arts and shows participation in NYSATA programming.



Olympics of the Visual Arts

Anne Manzella, OVA Chair

They Came, They Created, and They Conquered at the 44th Olympics of the Visual Arts Design Competition in April at the Saratoga Springs City Center.

The **Olympics of the Visual Arts** is NYSATA's extracurricular school program for students across New York State. **OVA** presents a series of design problems that require utilizing contemporary, cultural, and historical references, brainstorming, problem solving, and creative solutions. There are two forms of problem solving: a long-term problem that will require research, planning, and creativity, which is completed prior to the state competition and a short-term or on-demand solution completed during the event. All problems have performance standards to meet through visual and media arts. Teams of two or more at the elementary, middle, or high school level attend and compete against classmates of art from across the state.



This year our category design challenges were all focused on a common theme of *Natural Connections*, inspired by the Richard Gilder Center, designed by Studio Gang opening in May 2023, as a striking 230,000-square-foot addition to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Teams were encouraged to use this inspiring new addition not just as a backdrop, but as a conceptual springboard for their OVA driven creative design solutions.

Teams were scored by our volunteer adjudicators on the strength of their research and planning portfolio, their long-term category design solution and their on-demand design solution to the challenge of "Cell'eburation of Life".



Design Prompts in each category included:

Drawing: *Patterns of Life*

Painting: *Canyon of Light*

Illustration: *Moonlight Magic*

Sculpture: *Insects Inside*

Fashion: *Aquatic Threads*

Architecture: *Biomorphic School*

Photography: *Shifting Perspective*

Design: *Natural (Table) Setting*

This year we had just under 900 students in attendance at the event participating on over 200 teams. The event enrolled between 20-36 teams in each category. Enjoy viewing the collection of entries [HERE](#). And check out our award winners [HERE](#).

We are so thankful to our dedicated group of volunteers who helped us facilitate the event this year. We are always welcoming interested artists, designers, and teachers who would like to join us, especially people who work in creative industries related to our design categories. Please connect with us to offer any suggestions for future volunteers and adjudicators. ova@nysata.org.

CNA Awards 2026

Drawing:
Patterns of Life

Elementary Clinton - 1st Gloversville - 2nd Pleasantville - 3rd	Middle School Valley Stream #24 - 1st Goshen - 2nd Niskayuna - 3rd	High School Saratoga Springs - 1st Clinton - 2nd Gloversville - 3rd
---	--	---

Valley Stream Middle School - Hyndman Creativity

Elementary Gloversville - 1st Pleasantville - 2nd Mechanicville - 3rd	Middle School Brentwood - 1st Goshen - 2nd Valley Stream #24 - 3rd	High School Gloversville - 1st Goshen - 2nd Hicksville - 3rd	Painting: Canyon of Light
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Goshen High School - Hyndman Creativity

Illustration:
Moonlight Magic

Elementary Saratoga Springs - 1st Clinton - 2nd Brentwood - 3rd	Middle School Niskayuna - 1st Tuckahoe - 2nd Clinton - 3rd	High School Niskayuna - 1st Syosset - 2nd Brentwood - 3rd
---	--	---

South Colonie High School - Hyndman Creativity

Elementary Niskayuna - 1st Pleasantville - 2nd Brentwood - 3rd	Middle School Brentwood - 1st Mechanicville - 2nd Valley Stream #24 - 3rd	High School North Colonie - 1st Broadalbin-Perth - 2nd Wappingers - 3rd	Sculpture: Insect Inside
--	---	---	------------------------------------

Syosset High School - Hyndman Creativity

Fashion:
Aquatic Threads

Elementary Brewster - 1st Saratoga Springs - 2nd Brentwood - 3rd	Middle School Margaretville - 1st Goshen - 2nd Brewster - 3rd	High School Margaretville - 1st Saratoga Springs - 2nd Goshen - 3rd
--	---	---

Syosset - Hyndman Creativity

Elementary Brewster - 1st Saratoga Springs - 2nd Clinton - 3rd	Middle School Tuckahoe - 1st Valley Stream #24 - 2nd Brewster - 3rd	High School Valley Stream - 1st Broadalbin-Perth - 2nd Troy City - 3rd	Architecture: Biomorphic School
--	---	--	---

Valley Stream High School - Hyndman Creativity

Photography:
Shifting Perspective

Elementary Gloversville - 1st Westhill - 2nd Saratoga Springs - 3rd	Middle School Brentwood - 1st Tuckahoe - 2nd Pleasantville - 3rd	High School Broadalbin-Perth - 1st Clinton - 2nd Wappingers - 3rd
---	--	---

Clinton High School - Hyndman Creativity

Elementary Brewster - 1st Clinton - 2nd Deposit - 3rd	Middle School Tuckahoe - 1st Brewster - 2nd Clinton - 3rd	High School Margaretville - 1st Cambridge - 2nd Syosset - 3rd	Design: Natural Setting
---	---	---	-----------------------------------

Brewster - Hyndman Creativity





Thanks To So Many Special People for Making the Olympics of the Visual Arts 2026 come back together again.

RAVEN Events, Melanie Painter, Sara Bussert, Leslie Midgley, Terri Konu, Helen Findlay, Lauren Delaney, Cindy Henry Wood, Shannon Elliott, Cheryl Schweider our Entire Volunteer Team, AND every participating art teacher advisor, parent and student.






Sketchbook Challenge



*Kathleen Pfeifer
Watercolor and charcoal pencil*



*Meri Tomasulo-Pellow
Acrylic on Canvas
"My Beauty, My Sunshine, My Santina"*



*Samantha Nolte-Yupari
Imbolc melting Gelli print and collage accordion book*



Kristin Jaeger

After my father passed away I received his art and craft materials. I had not created for myself in such a long time, and I wanted to explore, release and connect more to my father so I decided to start "playing" with his materials in a sketchbook. Subconsciously, with no end in mind, these two sketchbook pieces are symbolic of my relationship with my dad not only in the physical sense of using some of his media and tools, but the subject matter in both pieces are representative of him and our relationship with each other. I have found "playing" in my sketchbooks to be both relaxing, healing, and while also giving me a personal sense of creative accomplishment.

NYSATA News Sketchbook Challenge

Theme: *"The Artist—Body in Motion"*

For the fall issue of the *NYSATA News*, we are seeking sketches on the theme, *"The Artist—Body in Motion"*.

Consider the following questions as you create artwork for this challenge:

- How does experimentation with the motion of the hand, arm or body affect the outcome of a sketch?
- How do a variety of body movements with your chosen medium change the strokes and marks?
- What occurs when you need to walk away from a piece of artwork for a little while and just need to play—to try something different?
- How do outdoor locations that require a quicker and faster approach impact the outcome of artwork?
- How does a walk in the park inspire the creation of artwork?

Submission Details:

- Take a photo of the artwork (send in .JPG format, at least 5 x 7 in, 150 res).
- Title the image with your last name (ex. Young.jpg).
- Include a short one or two sentence explanation of your process. (Body in Motion)
- Send your entry to nysatanews@nysata.org.
- The deadline for submissions is August 10, but early submissions are encouraged.

NAEA National Art Honor Societies —Honoring Your Creative Students



Have you considered starting a National Art Honor Society (NAHS) or Junior National Art Honor Society (NJHS) in your district? Art honor societies move beyond the fun of a traditional art club and reward deserving students in numerous ways. As in the National Honor Society, inductees must meet eligibility requirements. For the NAHS, students excel in art scholarship, character and service.

The National Art Education Association (NAEA) has detailed instructions on how you can establish a successful NAHS/ NJHS [Chapter](#). The NAEA website provides a helpful timeline, information on how to use the constitution and bylaws for organizing a successful chapter and additional resources for meetings and activities.

A few of the benefits of a NAHS:

- Teacher collaboration and support
- Advocacy for the art program in your district
- Article and member artwork can be submitted to the NAHS News
- Senior members can apply for NAHS scholarships
- Members can participate in the NAHS and NJHS Juried Exhibit
- Members can be nominated for national awards
- Student virtual learning events
- Merchandise and Resources



Recently, NYSATA member Jen Matott celebrated the achievements of her NAHS students.

"NAHS has been a way to give back, creatively, to our school and each other! I'm going to miss it when I graduate "
Angela L

"I am honored to advise this group of creative and enthusiastic art students this year! We have 17 seniors graduating and I will miss their participation and dedication!" teacher- Jen Matott

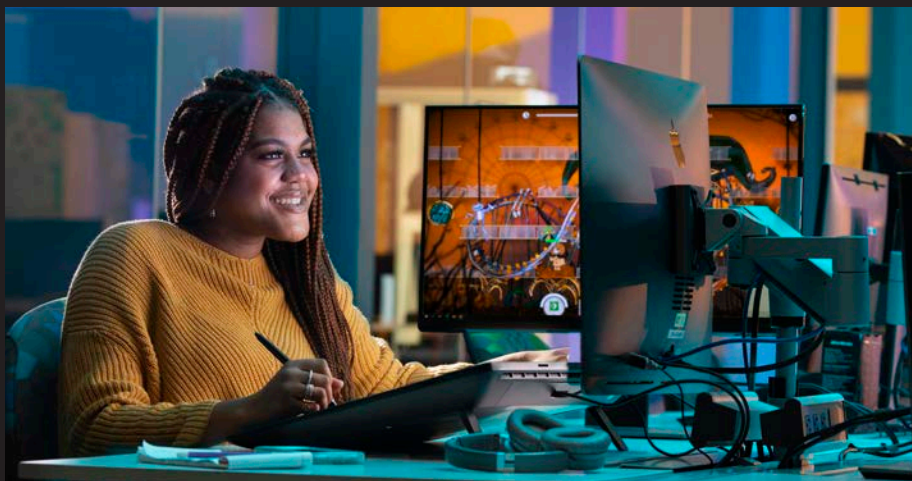
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2025, 2026
NAEA State Newsletter
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the NYSATA news

Call for Contributions

Calling for Contributors for the Fall 2026 NYSATA News

The Artist—Body in Motion

**This issue will go online mid/late September 2026
The deadline for content submission is August 10.**

The artist's body—through movement, material engagement, and sensory awareness—is central to the creative process. The act of creating is a full-bodied experience.

Movement shapes mark-making. A quick, gestural stroke carries energy that differs from a slow, deliberate line. The angle of the wrist, the reach of the arm, and even the posture of the body—standing, crouching, or sitting—affect the outcome of the work. We feel the tension in our shoulders after hours of carving a linocut. Our wrists ache from prolonged drawing, and our legs fatigue from standing at an easel. These physical sensations are part of the artmaking process. The studio is also a sensory-rich environment. We smell paint and clay, hear the hum of tools, feel the texture of paper, and see changes in light and color. Encouraging students to become aware of the physical experience of their art making is essential to the creative process.

As artificial intelligence becomes more prevalent in image generation, the role of the artist's body becomes even more significant. AI can simulate visual styles and generate compositions based on existing data, but it lacks lived, embodied experience. This distinction presents an opportunity for educators. By emphasizing process over product, and embodiment over efficiency, we help students understand what makes human creativity unique.

We invite you to share your stories on movement, material engagement and sensory awareness in your classroom or in your personal artmaking. As you consider an approach to the theme you may find the following questions helpful:

- How do you design lessons that are age appropriate for wiggly, energetic students?
- How do you teach fundamental motor skills in your classroom? How does this affect student artistic learning?
- How do you create inclusive experiences for students with physical limitations and/or sensory sensitivity?
- How you design classroom movement for easy artistic flow and material access?
- How do you create opportunities for tactile and sensory discovery?
- What occurs when students are provided with opportunities to play with materials?
- Has a physical limitation affected your art or teaching experience?
- Has a sensory experience in a new environment provided you with artistic growth?
- How do you invite students into an AI conversation—considering not just what art looks like, but how it is made and experienced.

Articles (around 500 words) and features (around 2000 words) should address the theme, *The Artist—Body in Motion*. Early submission is encouraged to allow us to assist and help you. All submissions should be sent as Microsoft Word docs to allow for smooth editing and proofreading. When needed please use APA 7 format for citations.

Prior issues can be used for reference, <https://www.nysata.org/nysata-news>. Images are encouraged. Signed permission slips for student artwork / classroom activities showing students' faces are required, (forms are available). Images should be .jpg format / a minimum of 5" x7" at 150 ppi. We appreciate your time and effort with article submission. You are providing valuable professional insight. Send submissions to [nysata news](https://www.nysata.org/nysata-news).

Valerie Savage Editor and Alyssa Marchand Design & Layout Editor

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Region	Region Name	Counties Included in Each Region
1	Western	Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming
2	Finger Lakes	Allegany, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Wayne, Seneca, Steuben, Yates
3	Central	Cayuga, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, St. Lawrence
4	Southern	Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schuyler, Tioga, Tompkins
5	Adirondack	Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton
6	Capital Eastern	Schoharie, Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington
7	Southeastern	Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester
8	New York City	New York, Bronx, Kings, Queens, Richmond
9	LI Nassau	Nassau
10	LI Suffolk	Suffolk