

Module 5: Media Arts in Practice

How can media arts teachers help their students acquire knowledge, skills and values that they need to achieve success in their future?

Outlined in a recent document released by the OECD, ‘The Future of Education and Skills-Education 2030: The Future We Want (2018)’ are details ‘offering a vision and some underpinning principles for the future of education systems (OECD, 2018).’ As media art teachers, we can help our students build competencies that will encourage their own sense of agency, enabling them to make the decisions required to build a future that will best utilize their skills, knowledge and competencies, adding value to our communities and society as a whole. As educators, we help students build competencies by conscientiously imbedding adequate media art related knowledge, skills and values, empowering a proactive attitude to take next steps based on informed decisions to pursue future goals.

Not only should our students learn knowledge and skills related to the disciplines we teach but they should also be capable of confidently transferring the application of these skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to resolve situations that are new, unexpected or uncertain to them. As media art teachers, we encourage our students to experiment, (make mistakes, problem solve and overcome mistakes) with learned skills/knowledge to interesting and ‘real to life’ scenarios so that the students can work independently or as a team to build a product that adds value to our society.

To prepare our students for the future that they will be heading into; we should enrich our course content with material that aids students develop a practice of reflection and understanding of their own perspectives. According to the OECD Report, the ability to plan, experience and reflect deepens a learner's understanding of a topic and expands their perspective. When a learner develops a strong practice using the ‘AAR Cycle (Anticipation-Action-Reflection) (OECD 2018) ‘in effect, they are developing their ability to become more adaptive and reflective in a manner that encourages growth in their thinking and actions.

Media art teachers have the benefit of teaching students how to utilize the ‘Creative Process’ steps alongside the knowledge and skills that they develop to create media text or products. The steps to the Creative Process include vital planning, production/experience, and reflection steps that students use as scaffolding to guide the creation of their projects. Putting the Creative Process into action effectively mirrors the AAR Cycle which in essence, could be applied to situations related to creating art and to solving any arising problems outside of the arts.

Encouraging students to collaborate with other students to solve a creative problem can encourage students to be able to work with others who may have different perspectives. Students must actively and patiently find common ground from which to build the project together. This process could potentially lead students to discovering that there are more solutions than the ones right in front of us and by digging deeper as we work side by side, we can find solutions suitable for many rather than just those impacted by the current resolutions.

By ensuring that our lessons, activities, and tasks are set up to include a wide range of skills, such as cognitive and metacognitive skills (critical and creating thinking, discovery and self-regulation), social and emotional skills (empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration), and practical and physical skills (applying new information and communication technology), (OECD, 2018). We can teach our students how to utilize these skills in new situations across a variety of media (ie. photography, digital drawing, gaming, graphic design, Multimedia, film, animation, journalism, etc.) working independently as in collaboration with others in our class and within the community. By encouraging our students to use community participants to create media products, they can learn how to use each of the above-mentioned skills to solve real world problems for local community members who could use a lift. In doing so, students are held accountable not only for their grades but for how they interact with the community members and help solve their problems at minimal to no cost. Working with people outside of their inner circle encourages learners to be flexible, patient, and creative in how they solve problems. They will need to keep an open mind to the needs and desires of the 'client' to successfully meet their goals. In doing so, they are providing valuable service to our community which not only builds their knowledge base and skills but also a strong positive attitude and values to match.

In terms of helping our students develop strong values, we need to present them with opportunities to develop their innovation. This comes from presenting situations in which students might have to solve some problems independently but more importantly, to work with others who bring a different set of knowledge and skill sets that will encourage the development of new knowledge, adaptability, creativity, curiosity and open-mindedness to solve a set of problems.

In a society that seems to be encouraging polarization, we need to encourage our students to be able to recognize the congruencies and connectiveness between what might seem like opposing positions in order to serve the needs of others. Being able to recognize a continuity between various data sources encourages students to become 'systems thinkers' who are willing to work in more integrated ways considering so much of our economy and development can be happening together from various corners of the earth at one time. Reminding students of this reality and encouraging them to utilize the world of knowledge and skill beyond themselves helps students recognize possible tensions and dilemmas even before they arise.

In all, we must encourage our students through thoughtful planning, production and reflection to evaluate risk and reward for their part in a production. Instead of hiding our input, it is better to act with transparency and honesty, while taking accountability for the outcome of our production. Through this accountability students can learn that it can be rewarding to be a part of solving a problem that we caused before it creates a bigger problem for others and inevitably ourselves. This can be achieved through the use of a reflective and peer reflective process throughout a production process. Providing feedback along the way at multiple check points helps students recognize where problems might arise and take accountability for them.

As teachers, we should feel empowered to use our professional skills, knowledge and experience to teach our students in a way that feels authentic to us, leading to more authentic

experiences for our learners. By integrating real world situations, our learners can better connect to the content as well as use their skills and knowledge in a transferable manner. Topics presented should be relevant and challenging, offering our learners the chance to utilize deeper thinking and reflection. Rather than trying to teach students every process that we know, it is more valuable to teach processes that can be built upon throughout the semester and applied to a variety of situations. For example, the Creative Process can be used as the backbone for every project the students are responsible for throughout the semester, encouraging deeper engagement and thinking with each project that is created.

In presenting material and lessons involving new and emerging technologies, we also must consider how to assess such tasks that are not typically assessed, using relevant new and emerging formats, tools and technologies that are relevant to the goals of learning might be.

Students should be offered choices in how they plan to pursue completing a task. By including student ideas into the development of the project, students are provided with a greater sense of ‘agency’ and ownership for the project. This can also lead to more authentic assessment of the skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes that the students have learned and are applying to their work.

Of great importance is to keep top of mind the fact that our goal is to engage and encourage a diverse group of individuals to work together locally, regionally, nationally and internationally to solve problems together using the skills, knowledge, mature attitudes and ethical values that will lead to better quality of life for a greater number of people while keeping the care of our Mother Earth and the environment at top of mind.

OECD, ‘The Future of Education and Skills-Education 2030: The Future We Want (2018)