

As an educator, my philosophy is centered on the idea that teaching needs to be approached in two separate, but pivotal, phases: Conception and Execution. While the two processes are independent of one another, each student needs to understand that success in one phase cannot overcome failure in the other. A strong work of art, regardless of medium, must be resolute in both these areas.

The first step in creating any piece is the conception of an idea. My responsibility as an educator is to help students develop their ideas into coherent works of art. As an artist myself, I have learned that this is not done by simply giving students the physical tools needed to create, but also the time and distance for conceptual development to take place. Students need to work through problems with the conceptual process of their project by asking questions, understanding the core message of their project, the sources they are using to inform their project, external references, possible reactions or criticisms, etc. Students need both the space and support to remove themselves as the subject to adequately tackle conceptual problems and realize the visual impact of their final product. Their ability to answer these questions about their piece serves to focus the initial idea, making it easier for the student to not only create the work, but also make connections to previous portfolio items and plan for future projects. Open lines of communication between the student and myself are pivotal during this phase because this is the time when adjustments can be made to the work with the most ease. Once production starts, however, the student needs to be completely locked in to its execution.

The second step in this process is the execution or the physical creation. This is where the technical skills of the student and the educator come into play. No matter how well conceived an idea, execution is key to a successful work of art. As a teacher, it is my responsibility to mitigate any technical problems the student might encounter, especially ones they do not see coming. It is not enough to give students the tools and simply demonstrate their use. While experimentation with any medium is a necessity, creating work without serious consideration will often leave the work shallow and the student exposed, lacking direction. Rather, as a teacher, I must look ahead for obstacles in the students' pieces in the same way I do in my own studio work. Put simply, the execution phase is not a catch-and-release type of relationship for the educator, but a continual process.

The instructional implementation of these phases is best executed using a variety of tools, e.g. Bloom's Taxonomy, reusable learning objects, etc, built on a overall foundation of engagement and access. The instructor must adhere to measurable learning objectives focused in the core competencies outlined by the curriculum and school. With these quantifiable goals in mind, all instructional elements

need to be clear, concise, engaging, and available on multiple digital platforms to best adhere to the modern asynchronous mobile student.

It is not uncommon in the creative arts for students' imaginations to reach further than their skills extend. In no way is this something that I discourage as a teacher. On the contrary, I use my professional experience to show students how every project needs to be well conceived and carefully executed. The work as a whole must be well thought out and the creation of the actual artwork must be precisely articulated. If either side of this equation is weak, the work as a whole is lacking. The role of the educator is to be with the student throughout this entire process, helping them ask questions and create a plan while conceiving an idea, and then assist them through the production to ensure the final work is strong enough to connect with an audience, allowing the viewer to see and appreciate every step taken by the student in its creation.

-John Cessna, 11/2014