



PREPARING FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2020–21

TIPS FOR TEACHING

VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN

IN A DISTANCE-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

OVERVIEW:

Distance learning can be especially challenging for the visual arts/design classroom. However, teachers can plan successful art learning experiences for all students by establishing overall consistent structures, communications, and expectations, as well as by keeping a flexible mindset.

It's important to keep in mind that the more current and relevant the lessons and topics are, the more students will likely be engaged. Not everyone has a computer or Internet access, and one computer is shared by many in some families. So, it's key to not assume that everyone will have access. Additionally, each school and/or district may have different types of online software which—from a parent's view—could create a challenge in setting up multiple platforms. Art educators should be flexible and consider providing physical, take-home learning packets as well. Lessons should be inclusive of all learners, scaffolded, and relevant to meet students where they are in their educational journeys.

The following lists, created by practitioners in the field, suggest approaches to successfully navigate the teaching of visual arts/design in a distance learning environment.

PREPARATION, PLANNING, AND PEDAGOGY

TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1

Establish regular structures, set clear expectations, set-up communication systems, and keep lessons current and relevant. Distance learning requires adaptability, modification, and a flexible mindset. Prepare lessons in advance and plan to be nimble in the moment, in order to provide both group and individualized instruction as well as on-the-spot feedback and redirection.

- 2 | **Encourage students to create a dedicated working space.** It is important for students to have a special space to do artwork/school work and then also be able to move away from that area. Larger families have a more difficult time providing space for everyone. Suggest a dedicated area of the kitchen or using blue painter's tape to mark off a "studio space."
- 3 | **Engage students with meaningful assignments/projects and ensure that artists and art styles are relevant to their lives.** Include work that is reflective of students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and experiences. Highlight artists, genres, and processes to which they feel a connection. Challenge them with new perspectives.
- 4 | **Apply art knowledge from the classroom to real-life design challenges.** Students love a challenge. Ask them to consider solving a problem through an artistic response. Some students are now designing games for their families using their art knowledge for aesthetics and materials they have found at home.
- 5 | **Be flexible in allowing students to take the assignment in another direction and to express their views, interests, and feelings.** How wonderful it is to have a student explain why it is important for them to try another idea to submit. Be that positive and accepting place where students can express their insecurities, mourn their losses, and express what they're going through. Visual arts allow for a safe space for socioemotional learning (SEL).
- 6 | **Engage the family.** Assignments that include student choice and voice will allow for scaffolding and increased student engagement. When parents are involved because they are excited about the learning, art becomes more important in our virtual learning process. It is also important to build opportunities for families to fully participate together and not just "assist" the child/student. Make family participation an important component.
- 7 | **Provide valuable and timely feedback, don't overly focus on grades.** Assessment is going to look different. Students still need ongoing feedback and will benefit from encouragement and validation based on the evidence within their artwork. Be prepared to provide regular feedback and redirection, and to help process their reflections and feelings.
- 8 | **Showcase their work and accomplishments. Celebrate the art in their daily lives.** Not every assignment has to be focused on making a finished product. Find ways to celebrate students' successes, whether through virtual exhibitions or individual conversations. Show students how to celebrate and apply their artistic knowledge successfully to the everyday; have them go outside and identify textures and patterns in nature, find objects in their homes that exemplify five geometric shapes, or find a functional kitchen object that they feel is "art" and explain why. Take a virtual field trip to one of the great museums and ask them to write a poem about an artwork that inspires them.
- 9 | **Focus on socioemotional learning early.** Student well-being should be the center of our work right now, and our instruction needs to reflect a place of caring. In this new distance-learning environment, your students need to be able to reconnect and find connections to everything that was once normal. Talk about things outside of school, encourage brain breaks and exercise, be willing to be vulnerable, and share your own home work space/studio. For additional resources, review the Social and Emotional Learning resources developed by CASEL, including free professional development, located [here](#).

SUPPLIES, MATERIALS, AND ORGANIZATION TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 | **Develop a "minimum, better, best" list of art supplies that can be used in a kit that students can take home.** Work with administration to align resources throughout the school so that students receive one "education kit" encompassing all courses.

- 2 | **Imagine everyday materials as art supplies.** Often, students do not have many, if any, art supplies at home. Lessons and projects should be designed with everyday materials, tools, recycled items, etc., as an option. This is a great opportunity to teach students how to problem solve around an obstacle, just as many professional artists do in their practice.
- 3 | **Develop visually exciting documents/videos to connect with students.** Visually compelling worksheets, videos, and materials will grab your students' attention but the content should be streamlined and succinct. Instead of only providing directions for students to read, create images and videos to explain processes.
- 4 | **Consider clay carefully.** Use of single-use packaged clay allotments for students is recommended. Do not allow clay that has been touched by students to be recycled and reused during this time. Prepare to pivot to 3-D design, art history, or critique for lessons.
- 5 | **Purchase or make student journals/sketchbooks to document artistic process and idea generation, and to serve as a place to practice technical and artistic skills.** While these could be purchased, they could also be constructed by providing loose copy paper or by binding copy paper. A folder with copy paper in it is also an alternative.

COMMUNICATING AND ADVOCATING TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 | **Connect the arts to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).** Reminder! NAEA already offers resources and support for considering the arts as part of a well-rounded education plan [here](#).
- 2 | **Utilize NAEA advocacy resources.** The NAEA Advocacy Toolkit, "Visual Arts Matter" publication, white papers, and position statements are available to support you in making the case for visual arts/design educators and programs.
- 3 | **Take part in planning efforts.** Offer to support school leadership in planning and establishing schedules and routines for the coming school year. In many cases, especially preK–8, art educators know the majority of the student body and can be very helpful in considering creative scheduling solutions, inclusive of the arts.
- 4 | **Follow up-to-date health and safety guidance.**
 - Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov: specifically for schools: [Childcare, Schools, and Youth Programs, Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#).
 - World Health Organization, specifically for schools: [Key Messages and Actions for Covid19 Prevention and Control in Schools](#).
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov

Note: This resource used in tandem with the "Preparing for School Year 2020–21: Tips for Returning to the Classroom" will aid in planning for a blended learning/hybrid back-to-school model.

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Founded in 1947, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) is the leading professional membership organization exclusively for visual arts/design educators, advancing visual arts education to fulfill human potential and promote global understanding. Find out more at www.arteducators.org.



SUPPORTING YOU IN FACILITATING DISTANCE LEARNING.

The *Remote Learning Toolkit* is a repository of remote learning resources gathered in one place.



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