

Ralph Gregory Krumins' Teaching Philosophy

The classroom is more than a funnel of information from instructor's brains to students – the classroom is a launchpad. It's an opportunity for students to gain knowledge and be inspired to transform knowledge into understanding. My desire is to instill a balance of three traits- *work, love, & play*.

To focus on *work*, students set goals, build framework, and gain knowledge to accomplish each goal successfully. The most important element in this trait is self-awareness, which is the understanding of how students fit within the structure of the world. The aspect of *love* is connecting students to the joy of learning, the awareness of the mind, the passion of the heart, and the connectivity to the soul. Empathy is vital while developing this trait, because it allows us to not only accept ourselves, but also the opinions, histories, and beliefs of others. To develop *play*, students adapt the world to fit to our imagination. Through curiosity and creativity, students recognize that we have an impact upon the world. The balancing of these three traits- *work, love, & play*- create a well-rounded artist, and, more importantly, fashion a formula that is essential for an exemplary human.

If our goal is for students to acquire knowledge, embrace empathy, and ignite imagination in studies and in life, I find that Active Learning techniques are integral for my practice. With Active Learning I reinforce that *process* takes precedent over the *product*. While instructing any subject from improvisation to script analysis, I want to illustrate that, collectively and individually, we are gaining knowledge, and, just as important, we are understanding *how* to transform that knowledge into understanding. Capturing the excitement of applying old knowledge toward future studies is essential for success with this technique.

Underneath this pedagogical umbrella, the elements that I utilize are Cooperative Learning, Constructionism, and Inquiry-based Instruction. To highlight Cooperative Learning, I create tasks and exercises that must be completed by small teams of students. Students teach each other as they use their prior knowledge to accomplish a group task collectively. Constructionism focuses on students adapting new information to build social norms and analyze how they fit by asking “How is this information relevant to me today?” Through side-coaching and Inquiry-Based Instruction I pose questions that allow each student to navigate through critical thinking and come to self-realized conclusions.

To assess a student's understanding of art can be challenging. I believe journaling is one of the processes that allows us to literally see the progress of education. Encouraging students

to journal not *what* they did that day, but shift focus to *why* tasks were tackled and *how* the undertaking affected them emotionally, provides critical self-realization that is beneficial in peer and social evaluations. With classroom conversations, I make note of contributions by each member. Their participation illustrates self-awareness as well critical analysis of their work and others. If students can recognize in practice the processes they are finessing, it highlights that students are consciously making knowledgeable choices and moving towards understanding.

To accomplish all these instructing goals, I first must understand that *my* quest for learning must never be completed. Revisiting known material and techniques to re-familiarize myself with the content is a requirement. Along with these refreshers, published articles, theories, discussions, and writings by leaders in our field reinforce current practices, or influence new techniques I implement in my own teachings. Conferences and educational workshops provide the opportunity to practice what I preach by exercising my constructionist beliefs to increase my knowledge, as well as the knowledge of others. Most importantly, as an artist, I believe it is necessary for the soul to be creating art much as educating. I find time in my day to practice my skills as a playwright, composer, performer, and theorist.

After all is said and done, when I find balance of *work, love, & play* in life, that's when I realize— *that's* what I want for my students. I want them to gain the understanding of how they fit in the world, how they connect to the world, and how the world can be adapted to fit their imagination. It's thrilling to watch each student grow in all aspects as they challenge their minds, their heart, and their soul- and realize the importance of all three. The growth happens. In them and in me. I want to help students recognize the importance of that knowledge but also the process at which they gain that knowledge.