



NAVIGATING SCHOOL YEAR 2020–21

TIPS FOR TEACHING

VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN

IN A HYBRID-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

OVERVIEW:

Juggling distance learning with in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing can be especially challenging for the visual arts and 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. Advance planning strategies for scheduling, managing materials and supplies, and designing lessons have become more necessary than ever. As school is an “all hands-on deck” endeavor for 2020–21, you might consider getting involved with school planning efforts—including scheduling, supply ordering and distribution, and room setup/organization.

As an arts educator who likely knows a significant portion of the student body, you can provide valuable insight as well as creative problem solving across grade levels, subjects, and classrooms. As for materials and supplies, individual student kits may best serve students, and organizing them can require coalescing school-wide resources—especially if supply orders have already been placed. See the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for current guidance on safe handling and disinfection of materials and objects.

It’s important to keep in mind that the more current and relevant lessons and topics are, the more students will likely be engaged. Not everyone has a computer or internet access, and one computer may be 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—creates 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, embracing a range of skill levels, technical experience, and/or depth.

You play a critical role in facilitating arts learning in safe, affirming, and transformative distance-learning spaces. Be mindful of personal privilege, bias, institutional discrimination, and the impact that social inequities and manifestations of racism have on arts learning, especially with the Black Lives Matter uprising amid COVID-19. Make time to learn about and process the insurmountable effects of historical injustices. This will inform and guide your instructional planning process to ensure that your most vulnerable students and families are served with compassion, creativity, and invention to begin to **radically dream** a new future for art in your new learning environment.

As you offer essential arts instruction during this school year, make your own healing and self-care a priority. While your instinct may be to continue working during breaks, your students and families will be depending on you for powerful arts instruction and a safe, positive space for creativity. Fortify yourself with things that make you whole, and don't forget the basics of artmaking, good food, physical activity, and sharing joy with loved ones.

The following lists, created by practitioners in the field, suggest approaches to help you successfully navigate the teaching of visual arts and design in a hybrid-learning environment.

PREPARATION, PLANNING, AND PEDAGOGY:

Hybrid instruction takes many different forms and scheduling is unique to each teacher and school. Overall flexibility and preplanning are critical aspects to successful implementation of this approach. Many schools and districts will have rotational schedules with AB days, where different grade levels are taught in person on certain days and remotely on others. Art educators are wearing even more hats than usual, delivering on this varied instructional approach as well as supporting the overall school community.

OVERALL HYBRID-LEARNING TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Engage students with meaningful assignments/projects and ensure that artists and art styles are relevant to their lives:** Include work that is reflective of learners' cultural backgrounds, interests, and experiences. Highlight artists, genres, and processes to which they may feel a connection. Challenge them with new perspectives. Find out which artists and protagonists are in alignment with the perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, especially those who are making art in this current moment. Make sure you are representing and affirming your students' identities in your community of learners.
- 2. Provide valuable and timely feedback:** 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.
- 3. Focus on formative assessment:** It may not be possible for students to be assessed fairly amid teaching conditions and crisis. It is, however, an injustice for students to suffer from learning loss to eliminate **learning poverty**. Formative assessment can help your students in continuing their learning trajectory. Eliminate failure from your assessment metrics and systems. Your students should instead have growth indicators that highlight their strengths and assets.
- 4. Plan for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** The entire learning community has experienced some form of disruption from their previously realized normal. Before diving back into content coverage, make space and place for students to engage in conversations. Design curricular units of study that center on SEL. As you gradually move into academic content, consider adding a social-emotional learning objective to your daily lesson plans (<https://casel.org>). Put your students' well-being first during learning. Never begin by lamenting possible learning losses or skills needed. If your students know you authentically care, you will be surprised how far they will go to make arts learning a priority.
- 5. Be culturally responsive:** When **planning** for an inclusive distance-learning environment, understand the unique identities and cultures of your students and families so that their **funds of knowledge** are seen as assets that can be sustained and built upon in your virtual learning environment. **Culturally responsive** art teaching gives students **mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors** to seeing themselves in your curriculum and beyond.

DISTANCE LEARNING TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

These tips are not the be-all and end-all, but they will give you a place to start as you see what sort of character your individual classrooms will have moving forward. Don't be afraid to mix it up, invent something new, or drop something entirely once you have witnessed it in action.

- 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 at home:** It is important for students to have a special space to do artwork/schoolwork and 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. Apply art knowledge from the classroom to real life:** 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. Learning can happen outside of technology and in the community through things found in students' natural and urban living environments. Work with students and families in planning safe artmaking experiences free from screens and that can be found outside of their indoor living spaces. Explore safe service-learning and **community-based** art activities that could be included in your lesson planning.
- 4. Be flexible in allowing students to take assignments into another direction and to express their views, interests, and feelings:** It's wonderful when a student explains why it is important for them to try another idea to submit. Cultivate a 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 SEL.
- 5. Engage the family:** Assignments that include student choice and voice will allow for scaffolding and increased student engagement. When families are involved because students 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.
- 6. Create distance-learning opportunities that acknowledge and celebrate family structures and dynamics:** Families are the first educators. Inserting outsider perspectives in home environments may challenge family educational systems that differ from the educational system imagined in a public school. Procedures should invite student inquiry and social interaction within the home environment, acknowledging that the process may be different for each student.
- 7. Showcase their work and accomplishments, and 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 venture outside and identify textures and patterns in nature, seek 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.
- 8. Plan for packets:** Understand and plan for hard copies of offline assignments that can be picked up at school or mailed to students and families. There may be extenuating circumstances that prevent students and families from accessing learning virtually. Packet-like work is a last-resort teaching method that should be available as a means to continue students' progress.

9. Video suggestions:

- **Know Your Platform:** Know the ins and outs of your district’s virtual platform, including breakouts, chat features, posting and sharing, polls, accessibility features, security, live or prerecorded session options, etc.
- **Partnering:** Consider partnering/collaborating with other teachers to share knowledge, tips, and even contemplate collaborating or planning integrated units cohosted on your platform.
- **Synchronous or Asynchronous:** Think through how you might offer synchronous virtual and live sessions happening simultaneously or how asynchronous offerings might best serve your students.
- **Recording:** Many teachers are able to record their lessons (or components of their lessons) in advance. They host them live by appearing to welcome learners before the lesson and again afterward for Q&A. Check out [Loom](#) and [WeVideo](#) as great resources for recording lessons.
- **Delegate:** Consider how students might assume various support roles virtually, such as chat monitors, sharing screens, or hosting breakout rooms, etc.

IN-PERSON LEARNING TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following lists, created by practitioners in the field, suggest approaches for successfully navigating the return to the classroom.

1. **Make multiple plans and embrace a flexible mindset:** Reentry to the classroom may take different forms and it is important to have multiple plans and be flexible. Be proactive by working with colleagues to imagine a variety of scenarios and think through different pathways to reopening.
2. **Plan for a phased reopening:** Establish options for a phased reopening—such as beginning with reduced hours or certain classes/grades—that will allow for monitoring the impact before a full reopening. Consider spacing/social distancing, staggered scheduling, transportation/busing, eating areas, and waiting areas (e.g., pickup).
3. **Increase transition time:** When possible, provide longer transitions for cleaning the art room and tools between classes. Work with colleagues and the administration to plan for flexibility within the overall schedule.
4. **Consider mobile teaching options:** Although “art on a cart” is not everyone’s favorite approach, it may be safer to have the art teacher move from room to room. Classroom teachers and other subject area teachers may travel and rotate as well. This can minimize the number of tools and spaces that need to be cleaned/sterilized regularly.
5. **Aim for reduced class sizes:** While smaller class sizes can allow for greater social distancing, it takes whole-school planning to consider all classrooms and courses of study. Staggered scheduling can support these efforts.
6. **Be a resource to others:** As an art educator, you are uniquely positioned to support whole-school thinking and planning. Volunteer to be a part of reentry teams and add your voice as a creative problem solver. Art teachers often work across the entire school and have a bird’s-eye view of school systems and structures that can benefit students and position the arts as critical.

SUPPLIES, MATERIALS, AND ORGANIZATION OVERALL TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Develop a “minimum, better, best” list of art supplies for inclusion in a kit that students can take home:** Work with the 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. Lean into alternative materials and construction methods.
5. **Broaden your curriculum:** Safety limitations and the mode of instructional delivery may affect your ability to deliver your tried-and-true curriculum. Embrace all aspects of arts learning and explore all areas from skills and knowledge to concepts and critique. Also consider how virtual field trips may be more valuable than ever in connecting learners to great masterworks.
6. **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:** Safety limitations and the mode of instructional delivery may affect your ability to deliver your tried-and-true curriculum. Embrace all aspects of arts learning and explore all areas from skills and knowledge to concepts and critique. Also consider how virtual field trips may be more valuable than ever in connecting learners to great masterworks.
7. **Communicate, communicate, communicate:** Communicate with your students and families about their **concerns and doubts** to help steer them through their shift in learning. Include frequent and accessible instructions in technology **setup**, procedures, instruction, **schedules**, and routines. These conversations will illuminate needs for modified schedules, devices, equipment, Wi-Fi, and tech support so students can fully engage in your virtual learning environment.
8. **Plan for alternative materials:** Art supplies should be limited to what your school provides and what materials families commonly have around their homes. Give alternatives to required materials and be mindful of the **disparities** that challenge a family's ability to travel outside the home and purchase materials. When it comes to art supplies that are needed in virtual learning, be flexible and realistic in your budgetary needs at the onset of the year, as situations may change rapidly and require a shift in your delivery of instruction from virtual to hybrid.
9. **Match student needs with supports:** Be knowledgeable of your students' diverse abilities, cognition, and mental health to support their management of time, technology, and independent learning in your virtual environment. Match students' needs with tech tools that support access to students' specific learning differences and account for the social-emotional needs of students who have experienced trauma or have different mental health challenges. Read your students' IEPs, 504s, and other intervention plans. Ask support staff how to help students in your new virtual learning environment.
10. **Design for participation:** Deliver content and materials with an inclusive lens to ensure full and equal participation of all students in their learning. Resources and materials should require low to no Wi-Fi and be adaptable to the multiple abilities and languages in your school. Live engagements and synchronous activities should be structured for caregivers who are unable to actively monitor and support students' work during the school day.

SUPPLIES, MATERIALS, AND ORGANIZATION IN-PERSON TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Create individual student kits:** If possible, provide each student a kit of "high-touch" supplies—such as pencils, erasers, drawing materials, and brushes—that can be carried with them. Develop a "minimum, better, best" list of art supplies that can be used for each project.
2. **Work as one unified school community:** Coalesce whole-school supplies to create individual student kits and only order to fill existing gaps. Work with the administration to align resources throughout the school so that students receive one "education kit" that will encompass all courses. When possible, engage parents, partners, and local businesses in addressing supply gaps to ensure equity and access for all students.

- 3. Follow CDC and WHO guidance on cleaning and sanitizing tools, materials, furniture, and spaces:** Wash/sanitize all shared tools for students after each use. Create designated areas in the classroom that are for specific purposes in order to separate sanitized tools and resources, etc. Tables and stools should be wiped down several times per day. (See links to guidance below.)
- 4. Be nimble with the curriculum:** Favorite lessons and units may need to be modified or postponed based on concerns related to collaboration, shared supplies, and high-touch materials. Be prepared to think through new ways to explore your curriculum.
- 5. Consider clay carefully:** Single-use packaged clay allotments for students are recommended. Do not allow clay that has been touched by students to be recycled and reused at this time. Prepare to pivot to 3D design, art history, and/or critique for lessons.
- 6. Routinize safety measures:** On day 1, celebrate your sharing of physical space and emphasize the importance of protecting yourselves and others by maintaining physical distance, wearing a mask, and frequently washing hands given the [CDC](#) guidelines. Routines for cleaning and using art materials should be modeled for students in the spirit of care, mutual respect, and understanding. Signs and messaging around routines should be free from biases and offered in students' native languages in addition to English. Give your students space to reveal their fears and share their experiences in making adjustments to their social interactions and cleaning routines.

COMMUNICATING AND ADVOCATING:

- 1. Connect the arts to the 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 tools:** 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 and 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 (CDC): [Specifically for schools](#)
 - World Health Organization, specifically for schools: [Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools](#)
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: [EPA](#)
- 5. Vocalize your visual arts and design needs:** Continue to [advocate](#) for equitable visual arts education that inspires [social change](#) in your communities given your new teaching normal. Visual arts has specific needs in hybrid learning. It is important that you voice your curriculum's needs and be an advocate for the needs of your students and families when it comes to art supplies that may be needed outside of the classroom.
- 6. Be specific with your language:** Use the words *coronavirus* or *COVID-19* when referring to the pandemic. If you hear xenophobic terms for COVID-19, say something. Research tells us to reduce prejudice by educating about the [disease](#).
- 7. Prepare for ongoing support:** From the onset of the school year, create time and space for grieving. Make it clear to students you recognize a crisis has occurred, and that it is important for your community of learners to experience loss together. Be able to identify when students and families are in need of assistance and have a list of resources to instantly connect them with professional help that they may require. Consider creating accountability partners in the classroom where students can check in with their assigned partner at the start or end of class. Alternatively, some students may choose to journal independently. Ultimately, provide space and place for students to be reflective in conversation and to feel heard.

8. **Identify communication preferences:** Your effectiveness in communicating with your community of learners will determine the level of student engagement in your new learning environment. Discover ways your students and families **prefer to communicate** with you about learning that is occurring in your virtual classroom using language they understand. If language is a barrier, work with cultural liaisons at your site to provide interpretation support and guidance on the cultural dimensions of communicating with families. If this support is out of reach, use digital communication tools such as the **Talking Points app**, which allows you to text in English, and the message is translated into one of 100 languages. Explore **Cogen's** seven C's in building relationships that are equitable, reciprocal, and encourage engagement with your community of artists. Listening **circles** are a great way for students to share what they value and what their needs are. The information gathered during these circles can be the building blocks for any distance-learning platform and methods of instruction.

Note: Used in tandem with the “Preparing for School Year 2020–21: Tips for Returning to the Classroom,” this resource 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 AND YOUR LEARNERS
DURING THIS UNPRECEDENTED TIME.**

The *Remote Learning Toolkit* is a repository of resources curated to help visual arts educators navigate challenges and opportunities within and beyond the classroom in the 2020-21 school year.



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