

Teaching Philosophy

Robert Norman Ross, born on October 29th, 1942, was an American painter, art instructor, and television host. But, most people know him as “The Happy Painter.” Bob Ross is beloved by many, including myself, for his soothing messages and calm painting style which is often a great instructional tool for young artists. However, some art critics question the value of Ross’s work. Stating that its simple and easily replicable style is not “true art.” But, to those individuals, I argue that Ross’s work is not simply in his brushstrokes. It’s in the lessons he teaches to his audience through his paintings. That is where the true art lies in Ross’s work which inspires thousands to not just paint but to be kinder to themselves and others.

These are lessons that I have taken to heart and wish to replicate in my own classroom. When we get down to it life is hard and students are vulnerable and innocent, and more often than not they get the short end of the stick. So, I strive to go into my classroom and try and make life a little less difficult. Just as Bob did for so many others.

In my classroom and my life, I have three main values. Patience, kindness, and inclusivity. I’m a firm believer in leading by example. So, to ensure that the aforementioned values are being facilitated by my students, I will first exemplify them. I will create an environment that is warm, welcoming, and kind so students feel safe to be themselves.

By using my core values of patience, kindness, and inclusivity I hope that when my students leave my classroom they will describe it as “fun, welcoming, and safe.” To ensure this I will foster an environment where students can freely suggest classroom improvements, either through a suggestion box or one on one discussion, such as layout, expectations, and curriculum. I believe students should be active participants in their education and have choices and say in what they learn. To accommodate that, I will regularly consult my students on what they believe

would best benefit their education. I will then take this knowledge and apply it to my lessons so I can ensure the happiness of my students while maintaining my responsibilities to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Bob once said that “It’s hard to see things when you’re too close. Take a step back and look.” That is exactly what I intend to do with these conversations with my students.

The arts are full of all sorts of different people. I think that’s one way of how art imitates life. This is why drama pedagogy relates so much to my philosophy of teaching. I’m not just teaching my students about theatre, I’m teaching them about life and all it has to offer. But, to prepare them for the world, I have to be completely honest with them and teach them about the hardships too. Those things are present in drama pedagogy as well and will help me in my journey to assist my students. Because even though the world can be hard, it can also be beautiful and some of that beauty comes from people treating each other kindly. In that way, I’m using drama pedagogy to help my students be the best people they can be.

Some goals I have for my students after they leave my program is that they will lead with kindness toward others and themselves. They will express themselves freely, and they will actively find ways to include others in any aspect of their lives. To help my students realize these goals I will first, lead with kindness in everything I do. I will also give my students opportunities to showcase their skills and passions in class. Finally, I will regularly discuss the importance of inclusivity with my class.

Inclusivity is a word that I think gets tossed around alot these days. But what does inclusivity look like and mean in an educational setting. What does in look like in educational theatre? To me, inclusivity means community and I plan to foster a large community for my students. People are all we have and at the end of the day they are what matter most. I want to

discuss this with my students and find out what community looks like for them so I can give them the skills to continue to foster their communities. As one of the happiest painters I know has said, “Gotta give him a friend. Like I always say, ‘Everyone needs a friend.’”

I am often asked why I like Bob Ross so much. The answer to that is simple really. He makes me feel good. That’s something I hope to do for my students. Just as Bob did for his viewers. Because I like to believe that he was right when he said, “We don’t make mistakes, we just have happy accidents.”