

An Education in the Arts—In Depth

[Gary Holland, M. Ed.](#)

I always wanted to be an [artist](#). The dappled light of a summer's day beneath an oak tree, with the lyrical sounds of children playing, a violin being practiced in the neighbor's home, the last smile my mother sent to me...these things are forms of art. And I wanted more.

I enjoyed visual art, and then studied several musical instruments because I couldn't learn the art I desired at college. I taught myself art, and later was awarded a M. Ed in Art, bypassing the bachelor's degree. I was attracted to human behavior as well, studying for a Masters in Counseling. Expression was attractive to me.

When I teach, which is where I am most creative, I am able to draw from various art forms. I teach students to do the same, facilitating their enjoyment of life. I teach them to be "out of the box" thinkers via the media of creation, a true art form.

My lessons are pragmatic, utilizing sound lesson design that leaves students able to apply the concepts and methods that were learned. I teach them to make their learning personal, rather than simply "pouring in" dry facts for the sake of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge that is made functional in a life is knowledge that will satisfy long after the class has ended.

I began my educational career as "the" art teacher in a 1000-student high school, in 1985, teaching 5-7 unique classes daily. I loved it. It allows one to be ultra-creative with their art program, which we creative educators enjoy. They awarded me the "Rookie Teacher of the Year" award in my first year.

I believe my combination of public school, university, and private teaching experience along with a breadth of education and my professional career as an Arts instructor and creator will set me ahead of most applicants. I'm proud of what I've accomplished. I'm not finished.

As one will see from the occupations and training I have chosen, I am dedicated to encouraging and equipping the education of young people. I studied not just one, but several art forms, from Art (M. Ed) to Music (BA-Music History/Literature and B. Mus.-Education) to Counseling Psychology (M. Ed in School Counseling and General-Family Counseling emphases.) I have taught Art and Music in the schools and privately in my own business, Creative Stuff, Inc. I have counseled professionally in the Boise area, working primarily as a [Parenting-Skills teacher](#) in the Boise School District (volunteer position-4 years) and as a psychotherapist at private practices in Boise (1990's) When my last child was a preschooler, I ran my own preschool, Play and Learn Childcare in Boise for 4 years so that I could stay home with [Alaina](#). So, I touched most of the educational bases.

As an [Art teacher](#) it is important to not fall into the old habit of just "having fun" in art class, which cheapens the discipline somewhat. It's important to go beyond the academic for academic sake, toward applying and growing the student's character. Art education applies to every other discipline simply because the goal is not simply to express oneself or learn a new medium of painting, but also to become "out of the box" thinkers, creative people who can take the mundane and make it more wonderful,

more effective; And this is what employers look for in a good employee. Creative people also tend to be more satisfied with their lives simply because psychologically, people are dynamic, goal-directed and if they don't satisfy their innate need to grow and create, they weaken. So, I facilitate the technique of growing oneself, through Art. What's more, I incorporate all the other creative arts into my lessons, from Music, to Dance, Prose/Literature, even the Art of Sport (if in doubt about this, watch a gymnast or ice skater perform; watch a talented running-back dance through the opposition on the field.)

I believe, and teach students how to be congruent in their lives, combining their inner dreams with their practical skills. Personally I practiced this philosophy by starting a public nonprofit charity, For the Children, Inc. over 10 years ago, in which we utilize my artwork, my writings, and human psychology to encourage viewers to become involved in the worlds of underprivileged, mostly orphaned children worldwide. From my Arts presentations, we have supported more than 30 orphanages and other outreaches in Haiti, Vietnam and China. I currently present [workshops in Humanitarian Arts](#)

Again, my goal was to combine my love of humanity/children with my love of the arts, using my skills to create a hybrid outreach that satisfies the soul, so to speak. I believe everyone, and especially students can benefit tremendously by adopting such a perspective, rather than just living, earning money, having children, awaiting retirement ... (you know how it goes!)

As an Art educator I teach a renaissance-approach to the Arts, expressed through Visual Art. The Arts all relate to one another, whether prose, visual art, dance, music. Students benefit by learning about the different arts, and how they make one into a better visual artist. I assign such tasks as creating a [Humanitarian Outreach](#), utilizing one's art, which requires a student to first "uncover" what their heart really values in life, then finding a population that could benefit from exposure to their work, and finally by creating their unique outreach—encouraging others to live more joyful, meaningful lives through this student's presentation. Perhaps their presentation will be a [video](#) or an [art exhibition](#), a combination of art forms, or even an illustrated story. It incorporates not just art, but psychology of self and career, learning about the needs and struggles of others, synthesis techniques, writing and research, etc. Finally, the student walks away with the ultimate non-grade goal of having a much stronger sense of purpose, and that elusive feeling of control that comes from having set a meaningful goal and accomplishing it in a way that lifts up others. Sound interesting? Kids like it.

My teaching style is very pragmatic: I help students to define the class practically: what I will learn, why will I learn it, how it is valuable to me, how I can get what I uniquely need from this class. We most easily achieve goals that we can define. A daily lesson will utilize the basic elements of lesson design ranging from the introductory element / recap and definition of the outcome we want, to the teaching of the concepts with q/a, to guided practice and small group work, to individual practice and assessment. The concepts and techniques are then incorporated into future assignments so they aren't forgotten. I grade on the accomplishment of technical objectives and effort demonstrated. I don't grade, but rather, I facilitate creativity.

I think that when one intuitively "dreams" (setting a goal for future creation) from the platform of acquired technical skill, a work of art will result which is very unique and often attractive to others. We

then “belong”; We find meaning. We are significant, and that’s what makes us happy, to paraphrase Dr. Adler and Dr. Dreikurs, PhD. To me this is living fully...the goal of most folks I’ve met who desire to do more than just work, raise a family, and watch 4-bezillion episodes of Oprah before they move on...

Ask a teenager what’s most important to them. You may just find that the tasks of learning to be successful, competent, loved by others and happy in life is at the top of their list...the most creative of endeavors. I think the Arts can be a tool for helping kids to accomplish such goals.

G. Holland

Reference links about the Educational Art of Gary Holland:

Press:

<http://www.fhtimes.com/letsgo/artists/holland.html>

<http://www.hollandgallery.com/TheArtofHealing.htm>

Websites:

www.hollandgallery.com

www.thecreativetraveler.org

Video:

www.youtube.com/hollandgallery

www.