

The Art Education 2.0 Manifesto:

Exploring the Implications of Web 2.0 for Art Education [second draft]

Technology is the campfire around which we tell our stories. –Laurie Anderson

The past few years has witnessed the emergence of new ways to experience the World Wide Web. The term “Web 2.0” has been coined to describe the Web’s transition from a collection of static Web sites containing information to a more dynamic, interactive, and social, participatory culture. Web 2.0 tools and services like blogs, wikis, podcasting, photo, video, and music-sharing sites, RSS, online gaming, real-time messaging, social networks, social bookmarking, mashups, and virtual worlds are now being used daily by millions of people around the globe to connect, communicate, collaborate, create, and share content with each other.

The widespread availability and use of these participatory media tools coupled with ubiquitous Internet access has led to profound changes in way people interact with information and how they work, play, shop, and learn. Instead of being passive consumers of information prepared by others, more and more Web users, including young people, are becoming producers of their own content and media products, and in the process are transforming cultural, educational, economic, and political institutions and practices. What are the implications of this paradigm shift for art education? Specifically, what role should art education play in educating today’s youth who are growing up in a post-digital world?

First, recognizing that participatory media tools provide a direct link to non-school culture, art teachers can (and should) incorporate these technologies to their pedagogy and curricula in order to increase the relevance of the learning experiences offered to their students. This is not to say that “older” more conventional media such as crayons, clay, paint, pencils, paper and the like are any less worthy for their age. All media technologies have a place in school art programs provided that they can help to promote the aims of art education. It’s just that newer forms of technology such as computers, digital cameras, scanners, and online tools deserve special attention in that they permit students to engage in innovative forms of communication, expression and learning using contemporary media rooted in their everyday lives.

Secondly, the use of digital and online tools as expressive art media in schools provides many unique and exciting opportunities for fostering the literacy skills required in the twenty-first century. A child's need to comprehend and participate in our technological culture today goes far beyond the scope of what is commonly thought of as “literacy” in schools. To be able to read and write through written language is simply not enough. To be “literate” today demands a deep understanding of all media technologies and their potential for human interaction, communication and expression. In this sense, a truly literate person today must not only be able to create, communicate and distribute one's own messages with new technology tools but also be able to analyze, interpret and evaluate the messages that one receives in a technology-mediated environment. Gaining such literacy skills requires education.

Lastly, the arts themselves serve to counterbalance the infusion of new technology into our daily lives. The "computer revolution" of the 1980s brought about dramatic changes of many aspects of contemporary society and more changes are inevitable. While the *computer revolution* may be over, new waves of technology continue to come at us as the fields of computers, consumer electronics, cable TV, and telecommunications merge together. This onslaught of super gadgets and digital services are transforming our lives, but some may wonder if for the better? In spite of all the promises and benefits of high technology, its drawbacks are too great to ignore. In particular, its potential for fostering glitz over substance, speed over sustained effort, and entertainment over critical reflection should be of concern to all of us—especially as art teachers.

If the intent of public education is to prepare children to become thinking, caring, contributing members of the twenty-first century, we must not allow technological advancements to overwhelm them, to numb their aesthetic sensibilities, or to dictate their personal identities. Rather, we must help children sustain and celebrate their *humanness* in a highly technologized world. In this context, the arts in schools are a curricular necessity for they provide fertile ground for cultivating in children those "high touch" sensibilities and values that we intuitively feel are essential for living full and productive lives in an increasingly artificial "high tech" environment. Some of these uniquely human qualities nurtured in arts classrooms include: the willingness to take chances, challenge convention, and explore the unknown; the desire to work honestly, with self-discipline, while acknowledging the success or failure of one's endeavors; the ability to appraise and defend what is personally and socially important; as well as the capacity to appreciate the warmth of a cello being bowed, the gracefulness of a ballet dancer, the unpredictability of watercolor paint being applied to a wet surface, the pliability of clay being formed on a potter's wheel, and the excitement of a live dramatic performance.

In the end, whatever technologies are brought to bear on the arts learning process, children must learn to use the tools they have available to think, to imagine, to create, to take on the impossible, to play with ideas, to explore, and to feel what it means to be human. As art educators, seeing to it that this kind of authentic learning takes place in our classrooms may be the greatest investment we make in our children's future.

The aim of this manifesto is to encourage art teachers to embrace the opportunities and challenges brought on by the introduction of participatory media tools into their classrooms. It works from the premise that increased use of these new technologies will not in itself lead to improved art learning; rather, technology is a catalyst that can provide new ways to enhance and in some cases transform art learning if it is appropriately engaged through challenging curriculum goals and sound pedagogical practices. With that in mind, the following ten guidelines can help art teachers make informed decisions about how to make the best use of Web 2.0 tools in their classrooms.

- Craig Roland (March 2009)

10 Guidelines for Weaving Web 2.0 Technologies into an Art Classroom

1. Think and act anew.

Art Education 2.0 is about moving beyond thinking of the Web simply as a place to search for images and information to using participatory media tools to exchange ideas and resources, to collaborate with others, to demonstrate our own creativity and learning before a worldwide audience, and to comment on the ideas and work of others. The Web is not only a great information resource; it's also a great big stage!

2. Focus on outcomes, not tools.

Art Education 2.0 isn't about teaching technology. It's about *using* technology to build a richer classroom environment in which the teacher and students pursue worthwhile curriculum goals. Thus, any decisions regarding use of the Web 2.0 tools and other technologies in the art classroom needs to be anchored in what we expect students to learn and accomplish with those tools.

3. Embed technology use into the whole art curriculum.

Art Education 2.0 is about making meaningful connections between content, pedagogy, learning goals, and technology use throughout the art curriculum, rather than treating technology as an add-on. The use of tools, both old and new, for expressive and creative purposes shapes our culture. Thus it should be seen as something integral to what we do in art classrooms and studios, not as something that is separate from or peripheral to the art curriculum.

4. Blend the new with the old, high-tech with high-touch, the global with the local.

Art Education 2.0 is about recognizing the benefits and limitations of both new and conventional media technologies when deciding what is best for students. There are times when using a Web-based resource makes sense, and there are times when the school's library or an art history textbook might better suit students' needs. Wherever appropriate, students should be encouraged to mix digital media with conventional art media, blend high-tech with high touch, and combine online resources with local resources to accomplish their artistic and learning goals.

5. Build global connections.

Art Education 2.0 is about connectedness and global learning. From arranging a student art exchange with another classroom on another country, to participating in an global art project with other schools, to searching for international art teachers to share art lessons and experiences with, participatory media tools offer a multitude of ways to connect, communicate, and collaborate with peers and colleagues around the world.

6. Use free and open source software and tools.

Art Education 2.0 is about using free Web-based tools and open source software to support teaching and learning activities in the classroom. The availability of free online application tools (like Blogger, Flickr, and Diigo) together with open-source software (like Firefox, GIMP, and Blender) distributed at little or no cost for public use and modification, offer a wide assortment of alternatives to commercially purchased software. Taking advantage of these options can be especially helpful to art teachers working within tight school budgets.

7. Use Creative Commons-licensed materials in media products.

Art Education 2.0 is about promoting responsible use of technology in the classroom. With multimedia projects increasing popular in schools, teachers and students need to be aware that the use of copyright-protected materials without permission restricts their ability to distribute or publish their work online. As an alternative, Creative Commons (CC) licensing enables content creators to allow others to copy, modify and distribute their work under the conditions they specify, like giving proper credit to the original source of the materials used. Sites that promote CC use (like Flickr and Wikimedia) are excellent sources of images, video clips, audio files, and text materials for use in multimedia projects.

8. Learn with your students.

Art Education 2.0 is about *flattening the classroom* so that everyone is a learner and anyone can be a teacher. It's about viewing students as partners in learning how to work with participatory media tools in the classroom to achieve the best results. Their feedback will help you to shape more effective pedagogical approaches to the Web for future students.

9. Encourage personal expression, collaboration and community.

Art Education 2.0 is about fostering and participating in communities of creativity and knowledge sharing. While still celebrating individualism, introducing social participatory media into the art curriculum calls for more attention to the social aspects of learning by offering projects and activities in which students work together to achieve shared artistic and educational goals. Doing so creates a richer, more diverse classroom environment within which students actively learn from each other as well as on their own.

10. Share what your students are doing with a world audience.

Art Education 2.0 is about seeking authentic methods of sharing student learning and work with a worldwide audience. Art teachers have long used the recognition that comes with the public display of work as a way of motivating students. The Web adds a powerful new twist to this practice. Instead of the teacher being the one responsible for exhibiting students' accomplishments, the students themselves can use participatory media tools to show the world what they know and are able to do.