

2023

Educator Spotlight: Jaime Valente

Jaime Valente
East Lansing Public Schools

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm>

Recommended Citation

Valente, Jaime (2023) "Educator Spotlight: Jaime Valente," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 38: Iss. 2, Article 12.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.2451>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Language Arts Journal of Michigan by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT

Jaime Valente

How long have you been teaching art, and what is your favorite thing about your job?

I have been teaching art for 23 years to students of all grade levels K-12. My favorite thing about this profession is the process—the look of awe and wonder on students’ faces when they see a new technique being demonstrated. They question whether they are capable of producing such things, and finally, surprise themselves with how awesome their own creations look!

Talk about the heart painting project. What is the inspiration for it, and how did you get students to create such individualized pieces?

The heart painting lesson was inspired by American Pop artist, Peter Max, whom I had the pleasure of meeting while visiting Michigan State University in the 1990’s. Peter’s family often referred to him as “The Positive Prince of Pop Art,” so he was the perfect artist to feature for our unit on color theory and emotion. His psychedelic, brightly colored images depicting love and peace on canvases, album covers, stamps, and even a cruise ship, inspired the students to create their own colorful heart designs.

My favorite thing about this profession is the process—the look of awe and wonder on students’ faces when they see a new technique being demonstrated. They question whether they are capable of producing such things, and finally, surprise themselves with how awesome their own creations look!

How do you foster a love of art and help students see themselves as artists?

I work hard to instill a growth mindset in my students from a very early age making sure they understand everyone can be an artist and is capable of creating. It’s also important for my students to learn that not everything they create is going to look great. It’s okay to have off days and create “bad” art too—I certainly have. I am not a fan of “cookie cutter” work where everyone’s piece looks the same or like my teacher sample. It is about individual expression and insight into one’s own style and cultural heritage. And although there is a pretty rigorous art curriculum in my district, with goals and standards to be met, art has limitless potential. There are ways to work certain techniques, elements, and design principles in there without stifling their creativity.

How do you consider equity, diversity, and social justice when teaching art?

I love teaching in a college town with such a diverse population.

The resources in our area are phenomenal and we can draw on each other’s life experiences and traditions for inspiration. I try to incorporate art history into my lessons and feature artists from a wide range of age, gender, race, and religion. It certainly can be a challenge to understand biases and avoid stereotyping, while being culturally sensitive. However, I feel my subject area is the perfect avenue for self-expression and visual communication. If artwork is created, displayed, or questioned (and one should take offense), we know it’s a safe place to make mistakes, we can talk it out with one another so as to learn and grow from the experience and develop a better understanding of our unique differences.

What is your favorite media to work with? What personal creative endeavors have you been working on?

I am a big fan of landscapes, and watching Bob Ross' Joy of Painting on PBS was one of my favorite rainy day activities as a child. There is nothing I enjoy more than being in nature sketching, painting, and admiring the beauty of the world around us. My husband and I also like to design and remodel projects around our home and cabin.

How can art support literacy?

There are so many beautifully illustrated children's books that help reinforce content when teaching art. Whether tying the concepts to cultural traditions, Indigenous peoples, or a social/emotional moral to the story, children's books are an essential tool in my practice. "Reading" the pictures can be a wonderful first step in learning to read, and most students love telling you about their artwork. Getting comfortable talking about projects and then learning to write an artist's statement really helps support literacy.

What's a good book you've read recently?

Non-Fiction, self-help, and spiritual growth are my go-to's usually, so Atomic Habits by James Clear is a great one I've read recently. Kristen Hannah is a favorite nonfiction author and I am currently wrapped up in The Nightingale.

I work hard to instill a growth mindset in my students from a very early age making sure they understand everyone can be an artist and is capable of creating.



Jaime Valente is an art teacher at East Lansing Public Schools.