



PREPARING FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2020–21

TIPS FOR RETURNING TO THE VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN CLASSROOM

Updated August 2020

OVERVIEW:

Preparing to return to the arts classroom may seem daunting, but it can be successfully tackled by systematically addressing each component of your instructional plan. Think through scheduling, managing materials and supplies, and designing lessons. Volunteer to get 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 for the next school year 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. (Links are below.)

Be prepared and flexible, as many material-rich lessons may need to be modified. When looking at lesson plans and curriculum, include **social-emotional learning standards (SEL)** alongside art and academic standards to ensure a 360-degree approach to each student.

You worked in real time to serve your students within the confines of your homes, while making the rapid switch from face-to-face learning to remote learning amid crisis. You have witnessed firsthand how your most vulnerable students have fallen further behind as this unwanted disruption has magnified the inequities faced by our families around food security, health care, access to technology, and racial injustices.

As you prepare with uncertainty for the opening of next school year, make your own healing and self-care a priority. While your instinct may be to continue working during break, your students and families will be looking to you to care for and protect their children with the uncertainty of opening schools. Fortify yourselves with the 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 for successfully navigating the return to the classroom.

PREPARATION, PLANNING, AND SCHEDULING

TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 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 a flexible mindset. 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 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.
- 7 | Plan for 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 social-emotional learning. As you gradually move into academic content, consider adding a social-emotional learning objective to your daily lesson plans. (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.

SUPPLIES, MATERIALS, AND ORGANIZATION 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: [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Schools and Workplaces](#).
- 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 | Focus on formative assessment.** It may not be possible for students to be assessed fairly amid teaching conditions and crisis. 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.
- 6 | 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.
- 7 | 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 TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 | Connect the arts to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).** NAEA already offers resources and support for considering the arts as part of a well-rounded education plan. See more [here](#).
- 2 | Use NAEA advocacy resources.** 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: www.cdc.gov, specifically for schools: **Childcare, Schools, and Youth Programs**.
- World Health Organization, specifically for schools: **Key Messages and Actions for Covid19 Prevention and Control in Schools**.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov

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 others 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 that you recognize that a crisis has occurred, and that it is important that your community of learners experience loss together. Be able to identify when students and families are in need of help and have a list of resources to instantly connect them with the professional help that they may need. Consider creating accountability partners in the classroom where students can check in with their accountability 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.

Note: Used in tandem with the “Preparing for School Year 2020-21: Tips for Teaching Visual Arts and Design in a Distance-Learning Environment,” this resource will aid in planning for a blended learning/hybrid back-to-school model.

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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