

## BACK TO SCHOOL: HYBRID OR FACE-2-FACE?

School is getting ready to start again or has already started for you. Early fall is my favorite time of year because I love the school supplies lining the aisles, busy with excited students and parents rushing to get what they need for the first day. This year, things may still be different, or more of the same, or back to normal... whatever that is. Whether hybrid or face-to-face, we all need to be flexible, focus on our kids first, and have fun every day, in every class.

### Prepare to be flexible.

One thing is certain: There is going to be change, uncertainty, and anxiety in the 2021–2022 school year. The only way we can be proactive and prepared is to be flexible, like the dancer shown in the first image, a prepandemic student artwork. When planning, focus on the big ideas and plan the big picture. Save the small details

until a few weeks before your lesson, just in case your plans have to change. Continue to incorporate technology so that all of your students can participate and be engaged with your content. Use your power standards and create your curriculum based on the essential information needed for each of your courses. Planning for flexibility will keep change, uncertainty, and anxiety in check, so you can do what you do best—teach high school visual arts!

### Get to know your students.

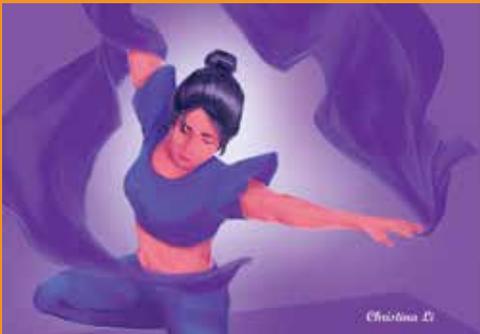
Many students will have a new appreciation for the relationships they had at school, while others will continue to avoid school like the plague. Most kids miss their teachers, friends, clubs, and “normal” high school excitement. A few will still want to hide behind a mask, like in this second image of student work,

and stay virtual. We need to know our students, in person and online, and meet them where they are. I suggest starting the year with your usual icebreakers and routines. Students will need predictable welcome-back activities to feel reconnected and reengaged this upcoming school year. Find out their likes, dislikes, and favorites; things have changed, and our students have probably changed too. We want to get to know them, but they love to hear about us too. Share information about yourself, your family, and what you like and dislike. I have a photo collage in my classroom that I change throughout the year by updating photos of my family. Offer students help, assign a few SEL explorations, and reassure your students that you care and want them to be successful.

### Have fun.

Ultimately, education should be fun. If learning isn't fun, why do it? If teaching isn't fun, then maybe there's a need to change professions! (That is not a suggestion; art teachers are in high demand.) We live in a new world full of excitement and wonder. Students need to reengage their observation skills, seeing the amazing in the everyday and being curious learners. If the art assignment isn't fun, update it, try something new, or do it completely differently. It is still very cool to be in school. Some ideas to refresh your class may be to start a chapter of the National Art Honor Society, find a teaching artist to coteach a few lessons, or reach out to a community partner to work with for the school year.

The 2021–2022 school will be the best school year ever! I am excited and hopeful that health, harmony, and happy memories are going to be made. ■



Top Left: Digital image by Christina Li, graduate of Dover High School in Dover, Delaware. Bottom Left: NAHS worked at Wesley College in Dover, to create a mural for display on the back of a building on Lookerman Street. Right: Mixed media image by Cealan Flynn, senior at Dover High School.



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