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Since my very early childhood, art has been a major source of delight and nourishment. I grew up in a fairly messy house whose walls were crowded with famous—and not-so-famous works of art. My 10-foot tall painting of sunflowers I had planted from seed hung for several years next to a poster of Van Gogh’s sunflowers in our front hallway. On Sundays, my mother would load us into the station wagon and drive us into San Francisco to see exhibits of art from every continent at the DeYoung or Palace of Legion of Honor. When I was about ten, my brother and I spent our Saturdays making oil paintings on large sheets of masonite in the big, industrial studio of Fred Hobbs, a family friend who was known for his giant, mythical-creature sculptures, like the one he mounted on a car chassis and drove all the way to New York. As I write this, I can still smell the turpentine and linseed oil, and feel the exciting chaos of those Saturdays at Fred’s studio. After my father had spent time in Indonesia, I taught myself how to wax and dye wall hangings and tablecloths of batik. During my twenties, I studied traditional fiber arts in Japan, and in my thirties, I made textiles for interior designers in L.A. Later on, I became a costume builder for stage and theatrical television. Through all of these years of personal enrichment in art, I held onto the idea that I would like to share my love of art by teaching children someday.

Having my own kids and moving from California to Spokane brought the opportune moment to make the shift from the world of interior design and theater arts to teaching art to children privately and in a school setting. Wheeling my art cart through the grade levels in my five low-income schools, I realized very early on that my art-intensive childhood was not as “normal” as I had assumed. An essential question I have pondered from the beginning of my art teaching career is, *How can I impart to my students the sense of delight and nourishment from art that I experienced as a child?* My response to this question has been to create experiences that seek to guide my students in discovering the self-esteem and satisfaction of tapping into the deep well of their own imaginative and creative powers as they learn to “speak” the language of visual art.

Following are a few of the teaching and learning pathways I have followed over the years—

* Seasonal sketching field trips in which plant science converges with mindful observation to turn even the most restless child into an avid botanical illustrator…
* Primary grades collage painted images with spelling words to make Art Poems
* Students work in teams to design and install an enchanted fairy tale of clay dragons, wizards, knights, castles and princesses in the school display case.

The second essential question that has motivated my work as an art educator is, *How can my work as an art educator help open the eyes and minds of the surrounding community so that people can appreciate art not only as foundational to the development of the whole child, but also as critical to the health and vitality of our world?* My response to this complex and persistent question has been to organize public events—at schools and at our local museum—where we bring families together around the fun of art-making in a wide variety of media.

Following are a few art-awareness events I have organized and/or taught in Spokane—

* Messy, chaotic and wildly creative annual Family Art Nights where teams of parent *and student* volunteers assist children and their families in sculpture, print-making, portraiture, and the creation of twelve-foot tall collaborative wall hangings, including a Quilt of Kindness and a Tree of Life for exhibit in the front entry halls
* School night at the museum and the creation of a giant, all-school collaborative junk-art horse-like creature…
* Free Family Saturdays at the museum with printmaking and junk sculpture workshops
* Downtown library art exhibits of district-wide elementary artwork