

Teaching Philosophy and Artist Statement of Todd F. Edwards

My teaching philosophy and approach as an artist and educator are safety, acceptance, inclusivity, respect, and growth. I believe that students, especially those in the arts, should make it their number one goal to grow with each new opportunity. Challenge yourself and your art and raise the bar before you have the temptation of becoming complacent. Only by creating an environment where we feel safe and accepted can we genuinely challenge ourselves to grow and explore, taking creative chances and learning from each experience, whether a success or failure. Only when we feel respected, appreciated, and heard, who we are and what we believe is essential, can we be empowered to do our best work. The uniqueness of our individuality and the safety to express who we are and how we view our place in the world provides the foundation to be comfortable in challenging oneself creatively and being vulnerable as an artist and human being.

Never be afraid to take a chance. As artists and educators, we need not fear failure as long as we are not content to fail. Only if we take chances and open ourselves up to the possibility of failure can we indeed be the best we can be. One of my favorite quotes is by Samuel Beckett "*Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.*" Failure is okay if we learn from our failures and grow from the experience. I am not advocating acceptance of failure regularly or creating scenarios that set us up for failure. However, I constantly strive to create an environment in which my students and I will not only feel comfortable taking chances but compelled to do so. A safe haven of creativity and artistic expression where mutual respect, the art, and content are literally and figuratively "center stage."

My teaching methodology is that of dynamics, energy, and creative expression. I evaluate the individual needs of each student as well as the dynamic of the group, devising my lectures, exercises, and assignments appropriately. I am a sensory teacher. I look to visual, auditory, and kinetic styles and incorporate them into my process. I challenge my students to not only understand the how, what, why, when, and where but to do them and experience firsthand the joy of learning. By taking artistic and creative chances and evaluating the success or failure of the endeavor, my students empower themselves, and we create space to allow growth and creative expression to flourish.

These are the virtues I live by as an artist and educator. They have served me well. I want to make them available to my students in the hope they can also benefit from those experiences.