DISCIPLINE BASED ART EDUCATION – DBAE

What is Discipline-Based Art Education?
DBAE approaches art education as a course of study, in the same way that other subjects, such as mathematics or science, are approached. The four disciplines studied in a DBAE lesson, art history, art criticism, aesthetics and art production, are discussed in detail in the following pages.

How and Why Did DBAE Originate?
The Getty Center for Education in the Arts, one of several programs run by the J. Paul Getty Trust, in Los Angeles, was established in 1982 to promote art education and to study issues confronting art educators. It adopted a concept, long held by art educators, that art needed to be studied in a systematic and sequential program the same way other “serious” subjects are studied. Also, four art disciplines should be included in the study of art: art history, art criticism, aesthetics and art production. The term DBAE was coined in the early 1980s to describe this new approach to art education.

Why Study Art History?
Art is a form of communication unique to human beings. The study of art from many times and cultures is one valuable avenue for comprehending the human experience. When children study art history, they learn to value the expressions of all people, and to understand the unique contributions of their own culture. Art history gives children a sense of the past and helps them understand the times in which they live.

What Does Art History Include?
Art history is the study of art, past and present, and its contributions to cultures and society. Art history tells us who?, what?, when?, where?, and why?

Why Study Art Criticism?
Often, people look at art and make an immediate judgment without knowing why. Art criticism helps us slow down our judgment process and helps us understand why we respond the way we do. Art criticism involves learning other criteria for judgment beyond our personal likes and dislikes. It sometimes helps us value art that we don’t necessarily like, because we understand that the art communicates something important. Teaching children some techniques for looking at art, such as “scanning,” helps them become informed viewers who make informed judgments.

What is Art Criticism?
Art criticism is informed talk or writing about art. Information about art is gained through a process of looking called Aesthetic Scanning, which includes the
examination of four properties: 1) sensory properties, 2) formal properties, 3) technical properties, 4) expressive properties.

**Sensory Properties** – What do you see?
- line
- color
- shape
- texture
- value
- space
- form

**Formal Properties** – How is it arranged?
- balance
- contrast
- emphasis
- unity
- pattern
- movement
- rhythm

**Technical Properties** – What media, tools, and techniques were used?
- media:
  - oil paint
  - watercolors
  - pastel
  - clay
  - wood
  - pencil
  - ink
  - marble
- tools:
  - computers
  - chisels
  - palette knife
  - potter’s wheel
  - airbrush
- techniques:
  - collage
  - construction
  - paint strokes
  - color mixing
Expressive Properties – What mood, idea or dynamic state does it express?
- mood:
  playful
  sad
  joyful
  mysterious
  peaceful
  terrifying
- ideas:
  truth
  pride
  honor
  courage
  wisdom
  authority
  compassion
- states:
  calm
  excitement
  power
  conflict
  suspense
  tension
  relaxation

Why study aesthetics?
Although few people could define the word “aesthetics,” people naturally engage in aesthetic inquiry when they consider the meaning and value of a piece of art. For example, people wonder what makes a particular object, say a vacuum cleaner, art, when it is mounted and displayed in a museum. This puzzle warrants an aesthetic discussion about the nature of art. Similarly, some people would say that a clay bowl is not art, while others would disagree. Here again is an aesthetic dilemma.

Aesthetic discussions are part of a DBAE lesson because such discussions help the student gain insight into his/her own response to the visual world. Sometimes people have a deep, emotional response to a work of art, and they may attempt to tell or write about the experience. This attempt to explain a response is characteristic of aesthetic discourse, and little children, as well as philosophers, will quite naturally try to describe why they like or dislike something they perceive. Teaching aesthetics validates and deepens this “experiencing” of art.

What Does Aesthetics Mean?
Aesthetics is the inquiry into understanding the nature, beauty, and value of art. The inquiry deals with “big questions,” such as:
- What is art?
• Are all people creative?
• Does every piece of art deserve praise?
• Can something be art in one culture and not art in another?

**Why Study Art Production?**
Creating things which give expression to one’s thoughts and feelings is an essential human activity. Children naturally engage in art production, and they enjoy learning how to use new materials and techniques so that they can more accurately express themselves. As they mature, children learn how to make complex decisions and judgments to achieve the effects they desire.

In addition to the satisfaction gained from producing art, children also learn through production about the artistic process. They can therefore better appreciate the efforts of other artists. While not all children will become practicing artists, they will all be sojourners in a visual world, and will benefit from their art production experiences in elementary and middle school.

**What Else is Art Production Besides Painting and Drawing?**
Art production is the presentation of ideas and feelings by creating expressive images. Here are some ways expressive images are produced:

• sculpture
• graphic design
• architecture
• crafts
• photography, film, video
• printmaking
• fashion design
• painting
• drawing