

Is Teaching Hard?: Internship Reflection

My name is Afsha Majid, I'm a third year student at Western currently enrolled in the Bachelors in Fine Arts program and am completing Honors in Studio Art with a Major in English. When I first decided to take a career path that would eventually lead me down the education route, I heard a million times from all different sorts of people that teaching would be hard. When I would mention that I want to teach junior to intermediate students, the reactions I would get were even more cautionary. "Teaching is a lot of work," "Teenagers are going to be a nightmare to deal with," "Good luck, you'll need it." Naturally, these warnings would go in one ear and out the other, because it seemed obvious to me that that would be the case. When the opportunity arose to be an intern with Thames Valley District School Board, I signed up hoping to get not only experience but also to see just what teaching might look like. I was assigned to Eagle Heights Public School within an eighth grade classroom.

For many, I was going back to their worst nightmare, eighth grade. A time of uncertainty as old doors closed and new ones opened towards the even scarier world of highschool. So naturally, I was nervous. But the teacher I was assigned under, Mr. Chams, reassured me throughout the beginning to the end of this experience. For the first few weeks, I was the teacher's assistant. I would help the students during their independent work periods and would overall assist Mr. Chams with whatever he needed, from photocopying to holding small tutoring sessions with the students. As I am a Fine Arts student, and Mr. Chams had his hands full with the rest of the subjects he taught, I was assigned as the students Art Teacher, and was meant to come up with projects and lessons that adhered to the grade eight curriculum. Each week, I would either conduct a brief art history lesson or a lesson that explained the elements of art. I wanted the students to feel encouraged and excited to create during a time when uncertainty and grades seemed to be the only things that mattered. As well, I ended up completing a total of six art projects with them and a handful of drawing exercises. From nature art (Fig. 1) to magazine collages (Fig. 2) to t-shirt printing (Fig. 3), I wanted the projects I introduced to cover a wide range of materials and branches of art as a medium so the students could see just how vast art could be.

This internship was unique for many reasons. For starters, the sheer amount of diversity within the classroom was astonishing. It was amazing to see so many different backgrounds and how everyone truly cared about and treated everyone with respect. There were a number of ESL students I taught as well, and from whom I was able to learn a lot. Working with both Mr. Chams and the ESL teachers showed me just how much work teachers need to do to adequately prepare students for every new stage they may face in life. That is especially difficult when there is a language barrier involved, and the efforts that teachers put in to prepare ESL students was inspiring. Another thing that made this experience not like any other, was the fact that I was also working with teacher placements who were teaching in Mr. Chams' classroom as part of their

own education degree. Although this caused for a bit of a full house, the students benefited greatly from having not one teacher, but four who were able to focus on particular student needs. Although I was nervous to be placed in a grade eight classroom, I was honestly pleasantly surprised by just how welcoming it was. The students were rowdy at times, but were overall very kind and well behaved. I wanted to be a role model for them, to show them that growing up is not as scary as it seems, and with the welcoming attitude and cheerful energy they would always bring to my lessons, it made it all the more easier to connect with them.

If I were to go back in time and give myself one piece of advice before going through this whole experience, it would be to have fun with it and to accept that things won't always go as planned. Although eighth graders are the oldest students within elementary school, they are still kids, and so, lessons and projects might not always go in the direction that you want them to. As well, because the age difference between the students and myself was not that great, I would tell myself to not be so afraid of relating to and connecting with them. Teenagers do have a reputation, and there will always be bad seeds in a group. But the relationships I've built with my students over the course of this internship have made all those hiccups nothing but bumps in the road. If I were to answer the question now, is teaching hard, I would say yes it is. It is a lot of work in class and outside, its understanding and patience. But all of that effort is paid off when you see the improvement of your students and the way they flourish into their own from all that seemingly hard work.



Fig. 1

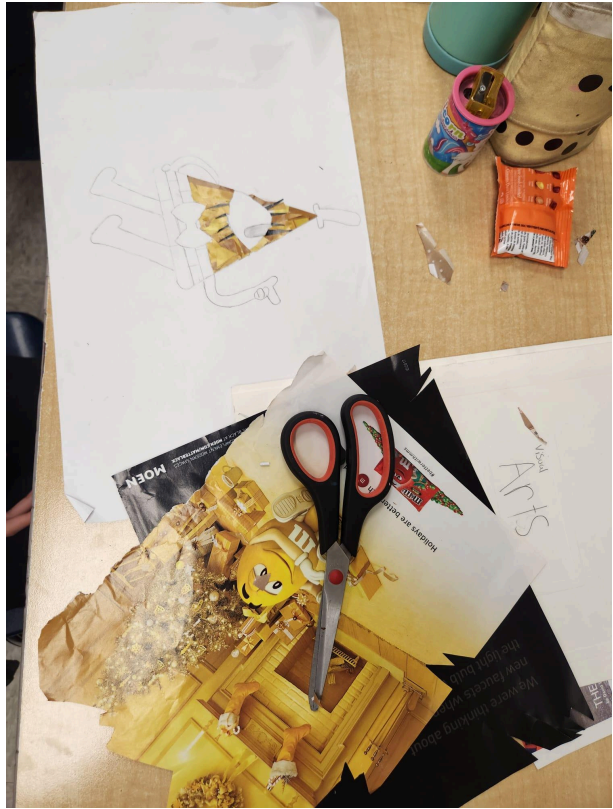
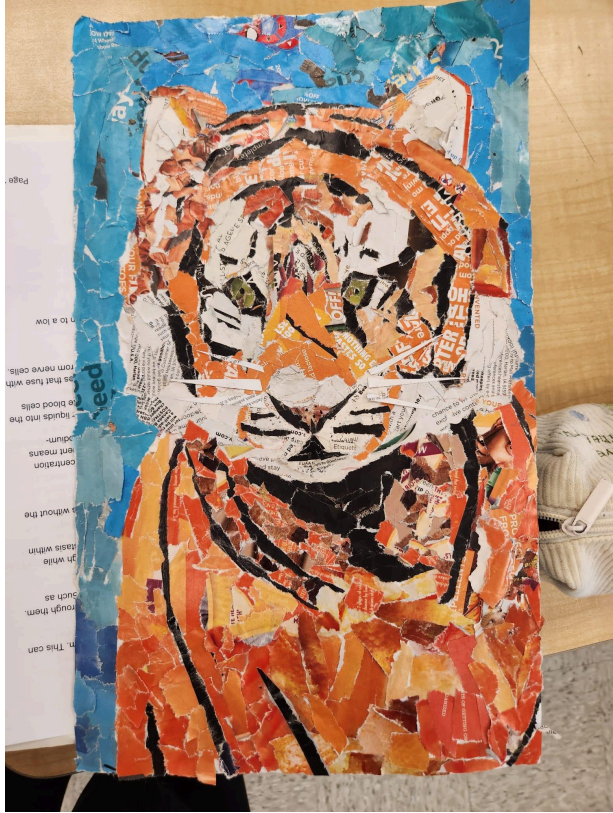


Fig. 2



Fig. 3