



Matt: Hey, everybody. This is Matt and Laura, and this is our next episode of Creatively Connected Classroom. I'm gonna get it-

Laura: I think it's the alliteration-

Matt: It is.

Laura: That you struggle with.

Matt: So, today we are talking with Amy Burvall, the co-author of the book called "Intention." And that's part of what we're gonna be talking about. And so, Amy, we just want to welcome you, and we're so happy to be talking to you, because I know it's ... We've known you for a really long time. Or at least, I've-

Amy: It feels like it.

Matt: It feels like it.

Amy: Yeah.

Matt: At least through Twitter. So, yeah, so welcome.

Amy: Thank you. I'm a big follower of you guys on Instagram. I love your stuff.

Laura: So, Amy, we've both heard you speak a couple of times. And one of the things that always intrigues us is that your background, if I didn't know it, I would think you're an artist. And you are an artist. But that's not where your path started. So, tell us a little bit about your path, and how you came to this idea of critical creativity.

Amy: Wow. Well, I grew up with, actually, a very arts minded mom. And I learned quite a bit from her. She was the mom that helped with the costumes and the school plays. And drew caricatures for our sixth graduation. And did, like, massive sets for plays using card board and just random stuff. So, she was always making something. And I think I inherited that feeling like, get up and every day just make something. And I really love that quote. I think I've included in the book,



from Van Gogh, which, he said, "Make something beautiful every day." Even if it's a meal for your kids, or a little poem or something.

Amy: And I really try to live that. As small as it can be. And I think that's my philosophy, creativity, especially in the classroom, doesn't have to be this grandiose thing that's gonna take forever and cost a lot of money and supplies. It can be very, very simple. So, Dan and I have approached the book that way, that we wanted to make it easy for anybody in any classroom, math, science, whatever, to incorporate creative thinking. And thinking like an artist. So, I guess that's kind of where my background comes. It's sort of by osmosis. And then I taught in the classroom, I actually taught everything from grade five through seniors and actually some higher ed as well, for 20 something odd years, and always tried to teach through the lens of the arts, and humanities, poetry and that kind of thing. And I really, truly believe everything can be taught through the lens of the arts, and even philosophy as well, coupled.

Matt: Oh yeah, for sure.

Amy: It just makes things more relevant. And I remember my history kids were freaking out that, "Oh my gosh, we're studying so much about the arts, about music, and film, [inaudible 00:03:50], or whatever." And it's like, yeah. Yeah, because that's [crosstalk 00:03:58]-

Matt: Oh yeah. That's awesome.

Laura: Well, that actually, so I don't know, I don't know that I've ever shared this, but I am a huge Billy Joel fan, and that comment you just said, the lens of the arts, it makes me think of, "We Didn't Start the Fire." Do you know what song? I love that song, because it takes you through this whole historical, you can actually feel like you're going through the pieces of history. And it's a song. And that's what's so cool about your book, is it's the arts, like, with an S, not just art.

Laura: You know? And I think sometimes people get really narrow minded about art. I think people think that creativity in the classroom has to be visual art, sometimes. And your book is so much more than that. And it's Dan's book too. Unfortunately we don't have Dan here. We'll have to get him on the later podcast, Dan Ryder. But, tell us, well ... And really, listeners, if you don't follow Amy, you've got to.



Laura: Because the things she posts, and her style, is tremendous. I just love looking at everything. But, tell us more around your thoughts about it not just being visual art, but being arts with an S.

Amy: I think ... Dan really came from a strong practice of design thinking. And makery, I guess, in the classroom. Me, my personal art, I guess, the art that I tend to gravitate towards, and the projects I've done revolve around remix. And one of my big things several years ago, way back when I first got diagnosed with cancer, I actually found sort of a cathartic salvation through [inaudible 00:05:45], and that was through the History for Music lovers project, which is where I ... We fashioned a mostly eighties pop songs, some Lady Gaga thrown in there, with historical lessons, with relevant lyrics.

Amy: So, I re-did these things. And ever since then I've been sort of really intrigued about remixing and how ... Because remix is transformative, and you're taking something that you know, and you're creating something new with it, like tweaking it, I really think that's the essence of learning. So, if a student can show their understanding by transforming something into something new, and that could be through music, or poetry, or visual arts, or even ... We have a section about the body. [crosstalk 00:06:36] which is like, Oreo cookies and things like that.

Amy: And it's just kind of intriguing because you want to give them the opportunity to have these sort of muse-like materials to work with, and that could be anything from you and your partner's physical body, to the stuff in your backpack that you take out and create a sculpture with. But yeah, we really wanted to break that idea that the arts are just visual and that creativity is just about art. Because it's really about the thinking, the art and the [crosstalk 00:07:12]-

Laura: Yes.

Amy: And I really, I love that, I'm exploring that now. I'm doing maybe a new book project myself. But it's in its little, you know-

Laura: [crosstalk 00:07:23]. We understand that, We've been kind of ... We really understand that.

Matt: You heard it here, folks.



- Amy: I'm really intrigued by the creative processes and thinking of famous artists, and philosophers, and makers and what got them through their daily dirge of trying to make things. And getting through a project. So, that's what I'm interested in now, is how to think like an artist, really.
- Laura: Yes.
- Matt: That's awesome. Yeah, when you said music, and the remix of the music, it made me laugh, because the first time I had heard [inaudible 00:08:04], I went with Laura to iPadpalooza. And you were making this big connection between the Sex Pistols and creativity. And of course, me being the rock person that I am, I like [inaudible 00:08:17]. So, you know.
- Laura: I've learned more about David Bowie from my husband than I would have ever, ever thought I could know.
- Matt: Yeah. So, yeah. It was, having that extra connection made it that much more valuable to me, personally, in that I was able to have something to really gravitate towards, and understand better. And that's kind of what teaching that to kids is all about. What's relevant to them, or what they understand, and being able to pull from that, and it's just awesome.
- Amy: Yeah, and I guess the essence of why we call it intention is, I guess if we're gonna put that in ... Because I remake and remix things all the time. I don't really contextualize it, because I'm just doing it for me, right? But when we're in a classroom situation, we want that intention, we want to see the intention, which is why we named the book that. So, we want kids to be able to articulate their creative reasoning behind all the choices they made, and behind the process and all that stuff. And that's where we see if they really get what they're supposed to know in the content. And that's why we called it "Intention."
- Laura: It's really, it's funny, you just answered one of our questions I had written down, which is awesome.
- Amy: And I'm also a psychic on the side.
- Laura: But, you know, one of the things, ever since we brought iPads into our own classrooms, is also giving kids that voice to explain their rationale, or their intention.



Matt: Purpose.

Laura: And their purpose. But we've been really working with our teachers on ... It doesn't have to always be written. In our world it's always an artist's statement, right? But, I've talked to the teachers a lot about well, why couldn't you use the app Tellagami and have the kids have an ... Like an emoji or something speak, it's their voice, but there's somebody else, you know, it just makes them more comfortable. It gives them more outlets. It's not always having to do the same thing every single time to explain your purpose, or your intention. So, what are some ideas you have to remix the artist's statement?

Amy: When I was teaching in the classroom I used vlogging quite a bit. This is before Flipgrid made it really easy. I had the kids all have their YouTube channel. They all had personal blogs that were a portfolio, basically, of all their [work 00:10:53]. And a lot of times I'd ask students to just vlog, even the final exam. And I found that there was a magic in this. First, the shy kids actually came alive in the vlog, because it was in the comfort of their own bedroom, where they're comfortable.

Amy: And they're used to the sort of confessional culture of people talking into the camera, where they might not say anything in class. I remember, I had a girl, I didn't even know what she sounded like, to be honest. When she did this vlog it was, like, professional. It was like, I'm in the running for putiepie. Like, she was just really animated and amazing. And so, she found her voice that way. Sometimes we'd even back channel. We'd do, you know, I love, and I often show this in my talks, there's this one student I had who decided to create his own guitar from scratch.

Amy: And he learned from YouTube, but he also got an apprenticeship with a local Hawaiian hardwood craftsman. I mean, it's the whole shebang. And he was also an artist, so he designed ... In PhotoShop he designed his own logo, and he explains why. But he put it all together in a film. And throughout the course of making this thing, which took months, he took photos, he had people take video of him, and he just made this "behind the Scenes, how this was made" film at the end. And explained everything. Even his troubleshooting.

Amy: And I thought, wow. That's really cool. If you can sort of archive your process along the way and then piece it all together in a montage of some sort that's got multi-media aspects going on. So, I think, this leveraging all the tools we have, my daughter, personally, is dyslexic. So, she's always struggled with writing.



She's, obviously, she's very artistic. [crosstalk 00:12:57] talking about her work, and showing it in different ways. Like you said, even illustrating it in panels [inaudible 00:13:05] a graphic novel or something about the [crosstalk 00:13:08]-

Matt: Oh, wow.

Amy: So, yeah, I think people should kind of be free of the tyranny of text. Although, I love words, and I love writing. But I think we can leverage so much more now, in different ways. And I think the novelty's important for kids to ... To be able to express in different ways. As we do in ... As we grow up, I mean, we're all expressing in different ways. Sometimes what I would post in Twitter is completely different than what I would post to Instagram.

Laura: Oh, I'm the same way, absolutely. My Instagram posts are very different that my Twitter posts.

Matt: I was thinking about a student, when I was teaching elementary school, who had a really strong, severe stutter. And you would have a conversation with him in class, and it was, you know, they would really struggle through what they were trying to say. But then I had them do their own critiques, and we did it via green screen. And they took a picture of their piece, and then I had them superimpose it onto a green background, and then they did a video of their hand kind of pointing to the critique of their piece. And it think probably while he was doing it there was maybe one or two places in there while he was speaking that his stutter kind of got to him. But other than that, you wouldn't have even known that the kid even had a stutter. I was so blown away by that.

Laura: I'm flipping through your book write now, because there was a statement, I think it's at the very, very beginning, where you were talking about the kids-

Matt: Oh, the art teacher.

Laura: The art teacher. Talking about the art teacher, kind of the troublemakers getting sent to the art teacher. The art teacher was the one that understood them.

Matt: It says, "I became a troublemaker and misfit. And troublemakers and misfits in my school were often sent to the art teacher, who was the only one willing to put up with us."



- Amy: Yeah, that's a beautiful statement from Howard Rheingold, one of my creative soulmates and heroes. And it's a story about his mom, who was, happened to be the art teacher at his school. And he went to this buttoned up school, you know, very ... A long time ago, very traditional. And she embraced everyone. And she just understood that everybody's kind of different, and expresses themselves in different ways.
- Amy: So, she was able to reach so many kids. And his story kind of talks about how after her death, even 40 years after, kids remembered her and were trying to find him, and contact him about her. It's beautiful. And I made a stop motion animation with his voice doing it.
- Laura: Oh, how cool.
- Amy: I did this old school stop motion animation using just Keynote and my own [inaudible 00:16:05], and his voice reading that forward. And it's a tearjerker.
- Laura: No, that whole thing, obviously it speaks to us because we're art teachers, and we totally feel this way. But I think the line that what's most important to us was that she taught permission, not technique. And I'm gonna, I'm getting teary-eyed just saying that. Because you talked about your daughter having dyslexia. Matt and I both have our own learning disabilities. We have a child with-
- Matt: Both of them.
- Laura: Yeah.
- Matt: Lucky for him-
- Laura: Yeah, he's dyslexic and ADHD, yay. Which we do feel is a gift.
- Amy: yeah.
- Laura: Truly, it's a gift. Because he's gonna be able to navigate the world in a beautiful way because of it. But, at the same time, like, I know for both of us, art was the place where we had permission to be ourselves, and to express ourselves in a way that made sense for us. And we hope to provide that for students. But it doesn't just have to be the art room. And I think that that's what your book speaks to, is that it could be anywhere. Anywhere in the building, or outside of



the building. I mean, it should be happening. That permission for expression and voice should be happening regardless of the space. Sorry.

Amy: Funny, because all of the art teachers I ever had were very, well, let's just put it this way. They left a lot to be desired. They did not ... No, no. But my mom and several other teachers I had were those types. So, they gave permission, and they let me cultivate thinking like an artist, questioning things, being able to explore different perspectives. And you know, do different types of projects than everybody else as well.

Amy: So, I think, yeah, you're right. It's not ... Although it's often the art teacher because they're so creative, and embracing this different style, sometimes it's the English teacher, or the Math teacher. And I think it can be a whole school culture. And that's what I am hoping that schools who ... Some schools have actually bought our book and use it as a book study, or whatever. And teachers are trying out different things. And it's really cool to see this culture building growing. There's a school in Vancouver called Brockton, and they've actually decided to make it the culture.

Amy: And then they've created these mobile maker spaces, because they don't have room for a maker space. So, it's these little carts that go around, and they have all these materials, and then they've created intention prompts, so things from our book, on little cards. So, at the end of class, or in the middle of class, or whatever, the teacher can just say, "Okay, go to the intention cards, and grab something, whatever appeals to you, and then try it out so that you can show your understanding of whatever, the book that we're studying, this math concept," that kind of thing. So, it's pretty cool.

Laura: That's amazing. I kind of want to, I want to see it in action.

Amy: They're doing some reports about it now, so, I'll be sure to let you know.

Laura: Yeah.

Amy: But it's cool because they didn't have the space. But they wanted to embrace this thinking, and they managed to do it on limited resources, which is cool.

Matt: And that's an intentional [crosstalk 00:19:35]-

Amy: Yeah, they're very intentional, going about it. We need more of that.



Matt: For sure.

Susan: Hey there, it's Susan Riley from Education Closet. This interview with Amy is so powerful, isn't it? If you're curious about how to integrate the arts with more intention, check out our brand new, five day challenge, coming up in the next few days. It's completely free. And I'll be sharing one specific tip or technique a day for five days, that you can use immediately with your students, at your own personalized level. Find out more and join in over at educationcloset.com/challenge. Now, let's get back to the conversation.

Matt: So, to you, I mean, what is ... I know we've heard bits and pieces of it. But to you, what does that thinking like an artist mean to you, the question, I guess?

Amy: So, for me, when people ask me about what creativity is, I always hesitate to say it's about creating something original or new. Because I think everything's remixed. So, I always say it's about connecting dots. And I feel that that answer kind of solves the dichotomy that some people feel about, "Oh, we can't have knowledge based, we have to have skill based," or progressive/traditional, or project based/rote learning. Or whatever. Because you do have to have knowledge in order to connect the dots to make new remixes, right?

Laura: Absolutely.

Amy: I really think creativity and what we do in the classroom, which is help students grow their dot forest, is what I call it, grow those dots, is important. And I use this example of ... I was watching Radiohead a long time ago, and he came out with a "Lotus Flower," and he was doing these cool hand movements. Thom Yorke. That looks like Agon Sheila, Agon Sheila's hands. Oh my God, and it's just because my one really great art teacher taught me about Agon Sheila. And I immersed in that history of his work. And I could make that connection without looking it up because it was just stored in my head.

Amy: That being said, I think thinking like an artist, I had to do a little TedX talk recently on this, so it's fresh in my head. And it's about being porous, which is I think approaching the world with wonder, and taking things in, and noticing things that maybe other people don't notice. So, when I travel for example, I always do this look down and look up, and I always take a picture every five seconds, because I want to capture something interesting. Oh my gosh, that leaf looks like a skull from or "Lord of the Rings" or whatever.



Amy: And I do that often, and people feel like, or they've commented to me that I have a childlike sense of wonder. And I hope that everybody would have that. But it takes some practice, actually, and intention. The other one is pushing past, which is really ... I learned this a lot from famous artists, and studying the way they worked, just pushing past adversity, pushing past limited resources, being perseverant. Perseverance and resilience is really important.

Amy: Often in my life, creativity itself has helped me through pretty dark times, having cancer and things like that. And my mom dying. And it's really at those times, I find that I just push myself to make things and it's healing. So, I really believe in that, as a healing force, and I think a lot of our kids need that, to be honest, because they're in positions that where they need some healing. And I think creativity is where it's at.

Matt: Yeah, no, absolutely, it reminds me of, it's a two-part thing. Reminds me of the quote from Richard Ashcroft, from The Verve. There's a song that says, "The child within has healing ways." And so, that makes me kind of think about that. And then it also makes me think about the journal curriculum that we've started with our middle schoolers. It's a visual journal, so it doesn't just have to be about the writing. So, you get those kids that are so-

Laura: It gives them options.

Matt: Away. You know, they're shy, or they're nervous about writing, or they don't like writing or whatever, then it gives them that building sense where they're actually making something to put into it, to build it.

Laura: To layer.

Matt: To layer, to work on. And so then they still have that process of working, and working through something, but they're learning that skill.

Laura: And I think our intention, our intention is that we hope that kids will find something that is useful as they continue through their life, that hopefully in middle school or it's a tool to help study the art, but at the same time, it's a tool to process everything that's happening around you. And as you're taking in all these things, and middle school is so hard. And giving them an outlet. And just like you said, I've been journaling for a long time. Visual journaling mostly, and I've used creativity, also through the death of my, my mother's cancer, and you have to have a way to get that out. To express that.



- Laura: And it can be such a healing thing. And we hope to give kids those tools. But I think that often times in school we feel the need to teach content so much that we forget to give them those tools.
- Amy: Yeah, I mean, you heard about our nuclear incoming missile thing. Pretty much the scariest thing I've ever been through. And immediately after my daughter and I ran outside, and we started painting, we just painted together in silence. And then I ended up writing a poem that day too, because it was just, like, we needed that.
- Amy: The third thing I gotta add, another P is playfulness. And just to have this vibe of tinkering, and playfulness and whimsy. We often say in the book is that rigorous whimsy. But just a feeling like it's okay to play, and even if you're studying something very serious, like a war or algebraic equations or whatever. I was at a school recently in California, and they asked me to do the scariest thing that I could possibly think of, which was teach a math class. And I am not a math girl. Let me tell you.
- Amy: But, fun, I appreciate it. So, I thought, how am I gonna get a little bit of intention, the book, into this math class? So, we decided to do something that was about personification. Because to me, if you can personify something abstract, like a math concept, it becomes more real. So, I asked the students to take what they've learned about their Geometry stuff like parabolas or whatever, and pretend that those were kids who were graduating from high school and they had a senior page.
- Amy: And who would their best friends be, and what would their quote be? But they have to justify why. And it took them some thinking. They really had to understand the essence of Parabola to get [crosstalk 00:27:29]. I learned a lot from them, and they really knew their stuff, but they showed it in this sort of personified, kind of artsy way, and they had a ball.
- Matt: That's cool.
- Laura: Very cool. And very playful.
- Matt: Do you know, that makes me think of, with playful ... Quinn Rollins, he's the Jedi, Kermit Jedi [crosstalk 00:27:56], but he's all about learning through the process of play. And how important that is, to allow that little segment of time, because it is important. And learning something new-



Laura: It connects the dots, just like you said. To me, creativity, all of it connect the dots, and I have to reference Austin Kleon to when you're talking about connecting the dots and all of these things. Because, you know, his book "Steal Like an Artist." But it's so true. I have a very good friend, Ted Kincaid, all of his art has some connection to Rubens or ... They're very classical, but very, their total remixes. And I think that all of us do that. I'm a huge classic film person. So, like, if I see noir, I'm like, oh. And then I have these connections about this dark murder thing going on, probably. But it's, you have to be able to pull those connections together. That's really what it's all about, it's it totally, it's amazing.

Laura: But I also liked what you said about being able to have wonder, and I think that's a hard thing for some of our teachers, is how do you inspire wonder for your students?

Amy: So, I suggest a couple really practical things. One is having a wonder wall in every classroom up until seniors. Because a lot of times you see them in kindergarten classrooms, where by the way, I used to go visit and steal all kinds of ideas.

Laura: Yes, absolutely.

Matt: Gotta bring it to the older kids.

Amy: They had this one really cool ... I gotta share it, because it was a beach ball. You know how beach balls have the different colors, and there was this just kind of a generic question on each strip of the beach ball. Like, what could it be, or what other perspective might happen or whatever. And they'd use it to throw, and then whatever you got, you had to answer that question. But I totally adopted that for my seniors. The wonder wall ... I also have a thing that I invented because my daughter was sick of me asking what she learned today, and she'd be like, "Nothing."

Amy: I gave her some creative constraints, because I figured that she could be more, articulate better with that, so I said, "Well what did you learn that was weird, what did you learn that was wonderful, and what did you learn that was worrisome?" Because they study a lot about the environment or whatever. So, I suggested having that in a space in your classroom, or even digitally, but kids could actually tag things that they've learned that were those things. And you could see how they felt about certain things, especially when they're doing independent research. Say everybody's working on a different project, different



research, they could actually share some of that knowledge in the classroom like, "Oh this is what I learned that was so weird today about whatever, but this is very worrisome."

Amy: And then wonder walks. Oh my gosh, so wonder walks, just so giving kids a theme, say you're studying a theme in poetry, or you're doing something about colors in art class, or it could be an interesting vocab word like nostalgia, or poignancy or something like that. And you send kids off to find things with their phones, and take photos, or their iPads.

Amy: And sort of create a collage, or a film or whatever. But they're capturing things in the real world, it causes them to really notice. They can even do statistics [crosstalk 00:31:45] in higher-level math, so it's perfect for any class, but really getting kids out there in the environment with the most powerful tool, which I think is the camera.

Amy: The ubiquitous camera. I think it's got to be the greatest thing ever invented. And it's interesting that the camera could have put artists out of a job because-

Laura: They were very fearful of it, that's for sure.

Amy: The impressionists were, like, the first people to really tinker with the camera, and get inspired with it, and play with it and this new technology. So yay, impressionists. Brave enough to face the potential foe, and really harness the power of that. And Degas' photos, by the way, are beautiful.

Matt: Well, it's interesting you bring that up, that artists have a fear of the emerging, the next step, emerging technology because I know that there are a lot of teachers who are very fearful of the technology. Like an iPad, they're like, "Oh well, if we teach them how to draw on an iPad, then that skill of drawing is gonna be wiped from existence. And we're not teaching them skill anymore, we're teaching them whatever."

Laura: We actually hear that from time to time, Amy, because we're ... I would say that we are very in thinking with Kathy Hunt's idea of true digital. We believe in teaching traditional artistic skills, but then merging them, and blending them with the digital. And we hear that from art teachers all over the country that they're afraid that, "Well, if I teach it, they still have to have just traditional skills, and I don't want to bring that into my classroom."



Matt: Because they'll lose the traditional skills.

Laura: They'll lose the traditional, they won't have, they'll use, they'll look up an image instead of using their ability to go find that in nature or whatever. So, what are your thoughts on that?

Amy: My thoughts are, something I'm doing actually as a pet project, I'm in love with Dadaist art and Dadaist artists, and poets, and I've been trying to take their techniques, so for example, cut up poetry, and merge that with digital tools. And so, I do a lot of analog, cut up actual words from magazines, put them together, take a photo. Now we're getting digital. Superimpose it on a piece of art that I've made or that I've found, and create these things.

Amy: And recently, I was asked I was commissioned to paint, and I would not consider myself a painter. But I'm practicing every day on recycled Safeway bags.

Laura: I love it.

Amy: I'm practicing painting, right? And I'm like, "How can I make this painting more cool? Oh, if I put it in this app." And so it can be animated and whatever. So I'm a big believer in the beauty of this hybrid, using stop-motion techniques. Old school, new school, whatever. But making stop motion with either hand drawn elements or hand found elements. But in the end, it ends up being very digital and therefore shareable. And I think the shareable aspect is very important. And having kids remix their own work in different ways.

Amy: Like, [inaudible 00:35:10] taking my painting, what happens if I use this filter on it? It's like noir. And what happens if I throw it in this [inaudible 00:35:20], now it's glowing and disco, you know. It's just kind of fun. And what I wanted to say was that artists tend to play with tools, and I like the way that if you can approach a tool with what else can I do with this tool? This tool is supposed to be doing this, but what else can I do with it to make it do something different?

Amy: And I used to have just a poster in my classroom, where when a new app came out, I remember when Vine came out. And I would have students curate these new apps, and they would, and then I challenged them to come up with a relevant way to use this new app in our classroom. So, like, Cinema Grams. I don't know if you've ever used those, where you take a video, and you erase most of it, so it becomes a still image, except one little thing is a video. So, it



has this weird, eerie quality of being half video, half ... It's, like a moment in time. It's bizarre.

Amy: And I said, "Well, I really like this, but what does it have to do with the theory of knowledge?" So, the [inaudible 00:36:31] said, "Well, we're studying emotion. What if we went out and made cinemagrams that emphasized one particular nuanced emotion." And it was really cool, because they then used this new app, a new art form, to make something relevant for a class. So, I challenge people to, actually, instead of having to feel like I've got to know everything that's out there, and know how to use it. Have your students do it. And it comes with the actual lesson.

Matt: Absolutely. I'm gonna have to use that. Because I know that we're getting ready to start talking about elements, and principles, and getting these kids that are taking Intro to Art. Taking photographs of things. And we're also gonna be talking about the different apps that are out there, and ones that they use, versus the ones that I use. And so that [crosstalk 00:37:23]-

Laura: You just threw out the theory of knowledge, which is an IB course-

Amy: Yeah, I taught IB [crosstalk 00:37:30]-

Laura: Former IB teacher.

Amy: Pardon?

Laura: I said I didn't know you were a former IB teacher.

Amy: Yeah. So, I taught, IB, mostly theory of knowledge and humanities for eight years. And my daughter's been going to an IB school world school, so that means preschool through high school, since she was four. I have been privy to all the cool stuff they do. Especially the primary years program. So, I we work a lot with IB schools, because it's an interesting perspective. And theory of knowledge actually was really cool, because you were supposed to sort of work with all the teachers, and all the disciplines, and make this sort of umbrella, a bridge across all the, disciplines which I also believe is a really great approach. This trans-disciplinary approach to learning. And yeah, so I'm a big fan of the program in a lot of ways.



Laura: Yeah, well when you said that, I am too, and really you just hit on the reason why. I love that bridge idea, that everything is connected. And that course in particular is just a really cool course, but I also, from an art standpoint, love the process journals, the IH, and the HL, whatever they are, the art kids do. And even if you go on YouTube, and you can just Google IB Art Journals and they are amazing.

Laura: And I love ... Talk about connecting the dots. What they do is they pull all these artists that they love into their journals, and they take notes, and then they start drawing and it's, it's completely about remixing. And I love those journals, they're very inspirational for what we're headed towards. For our curriculum in the arts. And I just think that they have a lot of potential. So, I thought it was cool that you threw that out there, because-

Amy: Yeah, I'm a big fan. I hope my daughter is in the art program, because it's a two year.

Laura: Yes.

Amy: It's like you're married to it for two years, and you're ... With the same teacher, projects that continue across the summer, I mean, it's intense.

Laura: Well, for us, one of the things I really love about it is that the kids actually learn ... They curate. So, their last piece of it is that they're curating these pieces of work, and they have to write about them, and then they're selecting the pieces that are go in their show as their final piece of production. That it really is about the entire process. And that's what I like about it.

Amy: Meta-cognition going on in that.

Laura: Totally yeah. Speaking of which, it's interesting, but one of your chapters in the book is called, "No Dumpster Projects." And you have this line in there that says we lay out the process for getting an idea to a product, building the layers of critical thinking and intentionality. The layers of critical thinking. Talk to us a little bit about that, the layers of critical thinking.

Amy: Okay, so first I have to give a shout out to Dan for the "No Dumpster Projects."

Laura: I love that one, as I think that's amazing.



- Matt: That's always the first comment that always comes out from a kid is, "Can I throw this away."
- Laura: That means maybe it's not been the best project.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Laura: Yeah.
- Amy: He has this great story of getting ... This kid came in, I guess, and said, "Okay well I'm gonna do a poster on," because Dan's running this maker space area where ... So kids from all areas come in and ask for help. So, he's like, "Yeah, I'm gonna make a poster, I guess, about the layers of the earth that I learned about." And Dan's like, "Really?"
- Amy: And he got the student to think more deeply about what would be meaningful, and what is meaningful to you and to others. And it turned out that this student actually, as a pet love, as I guess a hobby, was really into woodworking. Loved it, and loved woods, and different woods, and he knew a lot about them. A Mainer right? He's a Mainer. And they finally, through a lot of talking and counseling, came up with this idea that the student was going to compare the properties of certain woods with the properties of what he knew about the earth's layers.
- Amy: And being able to justify that. And then create this sculpture that would not be thrown in the dumpster because it was kind of a lame poster. But that it had his heart and soul in it, his, what I like to say meraki. It's that Greek term of putting your love and soul into your creative work. And he was able to donate it to the library [inaudible 00:42:21] school. And everyone could see it. So, Dan and I are both about making work that extends beyond the classroom, that has meaning for other people.
- Amy: Whether it's to help them, or just to be a beautiful thing in the world that people will appreciate. But more than just the teacher and the individual student, or even classroom. And for me, I had students do that a lot. Just digitally archive their [inaudible 00:42:49], and put them out there. And sometimes they even had the artists who they were inspired by write back. Or authors write back to them. Because that's the world we live in. People can communicate with you. For me, metaphor is really important in not only creating, but in articulating things. I can see you really know it if you can use metaphor, and analogy, and explain it that way.



Amy: And I think that's where all this kind of comes in. And I think that's the ... To be honest, I saw something today [inaudible 00:43:18], and you might be interested in it. I retweeted it. But it was about this, it was about AI created art, and how they're training these robots and things to actually make art that looks just like a Van Gogh or whatever. And I'm like, that's all great and stuff, because that's technique. But I want to know the pain, and heartbreak and [crosstalk 00:43:39] that goes into that ... That's what makes it worthy for me, is the artisanal effect. So, I think, just like, maybe that's why people like craft beers. I don't know. It could be.

Matt: The blood, sweat and tears that go into that.

Amy: It's funny, I was [inaudible 00:43:56] a friend at the Fort Worth Modern not too long ago. And she's not an art person. And we were standing in front of a Rothko, and she's like, "I don't get it." But then when I started to explain to her the intentionality behind it, and the layers, and that it really takes a lot of time to get those thin layers built, so the colors that he was working towards. And starting talking to her about kind of, the backstory about the artist, she was like, "I like it now."

Amy: And I think that that's really important. That when you have an understanding of the why, or the ... Or even the trials and tribulations of the artist, I think that's why people have a love of Van Gogh. Yes, we all hear he cut his ear off, but there's more to it. He was really a soul that had this desire to be a true artist. And he worked so hard, and challenging himself with Gogan, and all of those things. There's just so much to it. I think that when you know that you just love it that much more. So, I don't know.

Laura: Yeah, it's the backstory that's the key. Definitely.

Matt: No, for sure.

Laura: Tell me again, you said maraki is a-

Matt: Greek word.

Laura: Greek word?

Amy: It's M-E-R-A-K-I. And I came across it awhile ago, because obviously I'm not Greek, but I found it, and I thought oh my gosh. So, I've used it in several of my



keynotes, and I really think it hits home with this feeling of ... It's the very soul, and love that you put into whatever you do. And so, I use it in conjunction with that video that I show of my student talking about his guitar. And how he cried when he heard it sing, he said.

Amy: When a student says I cried when I heard it sing ... And he made it totally from hand, even though people said buy a prefab this, or a prefab that. No, no. He did the electric work himself, he did the wood crafting, everything. And that was a little piece of his soul in that piece. So, and that guitar could have been a poem, a piece of writing, a math equation. That's how really amazing mathematicians feel about their work too. It's like, it's beautiful, right? So, everything can be seen in terms of meraki, I think.

Laura: That's going in my visual journal tonight?

Matt: Meraki?

Laura: I'll make sure to tag you in the photo.

Matt: So, I started the conversation talking about when I first met you, you made that relationship between the musician artist, and the art artist. And so, my question to you is who's your music artist that kind of inspired you, or even visual artist who's inspired you, through your process, and your journey of making art?

Amy: Wow. As far as music goes, I mean, I do like the backstory. So, I've done some research on the process of David Bowie-

Laura: I knew it.

Amy: He took a lot of William Burroughs work, the cut up poetry and stuff. And I'm not a big fan of Kurt Cobain, I like his work, but I'm not a diehard Kurt Cobain fan. But it was interesting, I read that he used to write love letters that he didn't send, and then cut them up, and rearrange the words into lyrics. I'm like, yes, that is my ... So, I like all the Dadaists. And as far as music goes, I'm a big fan of Billie Holiday. She said she never sang the same song twice the same way.

Amy: And I really love that. Her own personal remix of everything, and the pain in her voice and everything. The imperfect beauty of it. So, that's gotten me through some good times. And I have to say, it might seem cliché, because there's so many artists out there, but I really do, the more I read about him and study him, I



love Picasso. Just because he kept ... Kind of like Madonna, reinventing himself, and tapping into these different influences.

Amy: Like, when he saw cave art, then he went a whole different direction. Or, I just went to an exhibit in London, where it was just one year of his life. And he was heavily influenced by his new mistress. And also fascism. Sex and death, yay. But it was really cool. You could see all this stuff just pouring out of him [crosstalk 00:48:59] with these new influences.

Amy: And I just like how chameleon-like he was, I guess. And that's kind of how I am. Because I get on these kicks ... In my own personal art I get on a kick, and I binge it, and then I stop forever. And then I move [crosstalk 00:49:21]-

Laura: Yeah, yeah.

Amy: So, it never be, like, my one thing. Like, oh yeah, making history music parties is my one thing. No, now I'm doing this. Now I'm doing this. And I'll do that ... So, if you ever see, if you go onto my Instagram, and you see, like, I don't know, 150 cut-up poetry things happening in the span of one week, you know that I'm on a binge. And I will move to a different series. But I encourage students to actually work in series. Like, think about things in terms of doing a series of them.

Laura: Yes.

Amy: And then stop and do another kind of series. Because I think it gives some things some cohesiveness. Like, [inaudible 00:50:02]. I don't know. That's just a little thing, a little tip.

Laura: I like it though.

Matt: And then you can always come back and revisit, and be able to look at it with fresh eyes, and be like, oh, okay, now I can take it this way if I want to continue that. Or, no, I want to just chuck it to the side and be done with it for something else. Yeah, absolutely.

Laura: And then if [inaudible 00:50:22] famous they can call your series your period. Like, oh this was my [crosstalk 00:50:26]-

Matt: Exactly.

Amy: My dark period.



Matt: This was my Hamilton period.

Amy: Angry.

Laura: That would have been all of high school. We like to ask our guests, for our listeners, just do you have any parting words of wisdom for the listeners around infusing creativity in the classroom?

Amy: Stay whimsical. Have a [inaudible 00:50:58]. Really just start small. Start small, with not much money, not much materials. One interesting idea is to get kids to think metaphorically with just the junk you have in the classroom, or the stuff in their bag. Just have them grab something out of their backpack, and together at a table pool all of those things together and say, "What could this be to illustrate this concept that we just learned?" Or even take photos and have, like, a metaphor well, and say, "What is a photo on this wall that represents the thing we just studied, or the character we just studied." Or, you know, whatever. The French Revolution. And then explain it.

Amy: So, I do this actually on the phone, like, looking through your camera roll. Find a metaphor for whatever, change. Poignancy or something like that. Or our political times right now. Find a metaphor for that, and then share it with somebody, and explain why. And it's the serendipity of finding it on your phone, and you didn't realize that it could mean something else, you know?

Amy: So, just start with the tools at hand, I guess. And start small.

Laura: Love it.

Matt: That's cool.

Laura: Oh my gosh. I'm, like-

Matt: Giddy.

Laura: I feel like we just have a, there's just so much affinity for what you do. And just the ideas that you've imparted today are ... I know our listeners are gonna be really excited, and I've had a lot of ideas. I've been writing things down as we've been talking. I'm like, oh my gosh. I just want to get back to a classroom. And start working with teachers. But thank you so much, Amy. You're always so kind and giving with the community. And we just appreciate everything that you do.



Susan: Heads up, seven up, friends. If you've been enjoying these episodes, be sure to subscribe to the Creatively Connected Classroom Podcast. You'll get a notification every time we release a new episode each and every week. And, for bonus points, take a screenshot and put it up on your favorite social media, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, you name it. Tag Education Closet and K-12 Art Chat so we can reach out and say thanks. And if you really love us with all the feels, give us a review and/or a rating on iTunes. It helps other find this show and connect with our incredible community. Thanks for all your support.