

# Ten Ways to Kill an Art Program

**Eldon Katter**

In the field of art education, clichés about why we teach art, what we teach, and how we teach it abound. Sometimes we have to step back and look at things with a humorous twist. Here are ten absurd, subversive tips that may help us think about the ways we sometimes sabotage our profession:

## 1. Be a Maverick

Dismiss researchers and theorists as ivory tower elitists. Ignore professional publications, stay home on in-service days, and forget about summer courses and workshops. Refuse to keep up to date. Keep your curriculum and teaching methods the same year after year.

## 2. Talk Big

Exaggerate the value of art education and translate your lofty claims into bumper sticker slogans, such as “Art Stops War,” “Art Heals,” “Art Improves Reading,” or “Art Reduces Crime.”

## 3. Be Hands-On Only

Design a solely hands-on curriculum focused on the exploration of as many different media as possible. Insist that breadth of experience is more important than depth. Don’t bother with art reproductions and don’t spend time on the historical and critical aspects of art.

## 4. Expect Instant Results

Make art as entertaining as possible. Make sure projects can be completed within one hour or less. Never provide continuity from one lesson to the next.

## 5. Stay Undercover

Make throwaway, disposable art. Do not send work home with comments or to display student work in the school or community.



## 6. Be a Big Spender

Run costs up as high as possible. Don’t take budget planning seriously and never bid for materials or join with other school districts to submit a bid for quantity purchases. Always order more supplies than you know are needed.

## 7. Play the Martyr

Make sure that art is always considered less important than other subjects. Insist that one period of instructional time every two weeks is adequate. Use a simple grading or marking system, such as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. List art apart from academic subjects on report cards.

## 8. Be Partisan and Divisive

Gear your courses to only the most gifted and talented. Screen students out of the art program. Argue that art is not something for the masses, nor is it of any value for disabled or at-risk students. Suggest that students from low-income families need to spend more time on the basics and less time playing with art materials.

## 9. Remain Aloof and Detached

Teach art in isolation. Don’t inquire about what students are learning in other subjects. Refuse to communicate with others about art. Your mantra should be, “Art speaks for itself. It does not have to be explained.” Excuse yourself from ever speaking to PTA groups.

## 10. Be Incoherent

When you speak publicly about art, do so in “artspeak,” using jargon that only veteran art teachers can understand. Tell parents art is a form of creative self-expression, it improves eye-hand coordination, it is therapeutic, and it is a way to keep idle hands busy.

Sometimes we act as though art education could function in isolation from the rest of the educational community. Indeed it does not. But if we insist on being mavericks and going rogue, then we are sure to make art education programs in our schools fail. ☹️

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