

COLLABORATING WITH A STUDENT TEACHER

June 3, 2022

A portrait of Robin Brewer, a woman with long grey hair and glasses, smiling. She is wearing a striped shirt.

A photograph of Garnet Valley High School, a large brick building with a modern design and a glass entrance.

A vertical list of terms: PAEA BLOG, COMMUNITY, ADVOCACY, LEARNING, RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE, VIBRANCY, each in a different color.

A logo consisting of three interlocking circles in blue, red, and orange.

Collaborating with a Student Teacher

Robin Brewer, Webmaster

Photography & Filmmaking, Garnet Valley High School

Robin Brewer, a Past-President of PAEA and current Webmaster, has taught photography and filmmaking at Garnet Valley High School for 17 years. Robin was named the Pennsylvania Outstanding Art Educator of the Year in 2021.

Collaborating with a Student Teacher

I was fortunate this spring to have a well-matched student teacher. I've been teaching photography and filmmaking at Garnet Valley High School for 17 years. My student teacher, Ashli, was an experienced teacher pursuing her certification. She also had technical experience in media arts and practical experience in the field of fine art and commercial photography.

This placement was for the full 14 weeks which allowed for a deeper connection between student-teacher and co-op as well as opportunities to collaborate. What I believed would be a typical student teaching experience turned out to be more like a partnership.



Our timeline was atypical. I saw early on that Ashli was ready to take on full teaching duties so we accelerated the observation/acclimation period. I gave up my desk and moved to the mac lab area during week 3. I turned over responsibilities for attendance, assignment creation in Schoology, as well as the online grade book. Most importantly, we sat down and discussed upcoming units and weighed our strengths and weaknesses to plan the best path forward.



We mapped it out so that Ashli had total ownership of her own units (Experimental Digital Photography and Claymation Group Films) and I remained lead on darkroom work and an upcoming AfterEffects assignment. Ashli started each class with an intro and took attendance. Occasionally, I would add a specific direction for darkroom or pre-existing

assignments. But in essence, Ashli was in charge. She was also able to flex her autonomy while I was out for the NAEA Convention and other absences. Ashli was not afraid to let the sub know that “she’s got this”.

By the end of the placement, Ashli had the full experience of being the lead teacher for 10 of the 14 weeks. We found that collaboration and co-teaching met the needs of our students

as well as our own professional goals. Ashli honed her classroom management skills and expanded her knowledge of Adobe AfterEffects and darkroom photography. In turn, she taught me a thing or two in Adobe Lightroom and some cool digital tricks. We even planned and executed an amazing field trip to the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia!



Lunch outside the Rodin Museum after our visit to Eastern State Penitentiary



I realize that this situation was a bit of an anomaly. Not every placement comes with this much experience. Experienced co-ops don't just have their student-teacher observe them, but they also observe to see when the student-teacher is ready to run with it. Open communication, collaboration, and a bit of trust can get them to take over and get the full student-teacher experience going sooner and gain more time to experiment and practice.

Finally, I would like to encourage experienced teachers to consider hosting a student-teacher. Reach out to your local art education programs. We all have something to share and can help the next generation of art educators not only fulfill their requirements but see exactly what they are capable of accomplishing.







