

HOW MANY MORE SCHOOL DAYS UNTIL SUMMER??



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Oh, the holidays. A great time of excitement, joy, and revelry for most, paired with a bit of stress, busyness and travel, too much food and drink, and perhaps not as relaxing as we all had hoped. BUT, we as teachers crave this mid-year break, right? We are all anxiously—students and teachers alike—counting the minutes until that bell rings on the last day before vacation starts. We try desperately to keep them all engaged right up until the end, despite their antics and their evident desire to also be out of the building, sleeping in, opening presents, and enjoying this chance to recharge our batteries, at least a little bit.

I always have the greatest intention to bring a ton of grading home, but I inevitably push it off until the last day, and then have less-than-zero motivation to do it. Instead, I spend my time on Pinterest and YouTube, watching gelatin printing and mixed media videos and plotting how to use the techniques in my classroom. I also spend a fair amount of time “art-ing,” retreating to the studio, and refocusing my artistic energy into productivity rather than regretting the amount of carbs I’ve ingested and the amount of money I (over) spent. I often find myself making plans to continue my art mojo throughout the year too, as the creative momentum I build over the break will wane. As artists and as teachers, we need this time to just be, to think, to plan, and to live in the process, until the magic happens.

After all, isn't that precisely what we teach our students to do? So, as we count down the precious moments until we have to return to the daily grind and to help our darling students make artistic magic, let's reflect on how we can keep our own juices flowing, until those last few days in June (that's still six months away, right? Oh, boy).

1. Start a new art journal or sketchbook

One of my favorite ways to reinvigorate my artistic practice is to start a new art journal. A go-to gift that my family knows will please me is a gift card to my favorite art supply store. So I usually pick out my next sketchbook well in advance of Christmas, in preparation for that virtual money to start burning a hole in my pocket! That fresh, clean paper nearly screams to be covered in watercolor and acrylic, in chalk and graphite, and my latest material obsession: Distress Inks.



2. Sign up for an online workshop or class

I didn't even realize how many options there were for this until a friend of mine suggested that we do one together. There are TONS of options out there, focusing on materials such as watercolor or fluid acrylic, paper arts, or polymer clay, or centering on processes such as collage, printmaking, abstract painting...not to mention those that are concept-based, such as "reclaiming your creative feminine energy" or "designing installations." Just do some searching! Seriously, just Google "online art workshops about ____." Whatever floats your boat, you will be able to find an online experience to suit you. If you don't have the cash for that option, plan to view some PAEA WebinARTs! Check for new content by clicking here: [WebinArts](#)

3. Set aside time for creative goal-setting

This is one I struggle to do sometimes, but I always have a more productive year of art-making when I do it. Before the crazy of the latter half of the school year starts, set aside a weekend day or evening to look ahead for upcoming opportunities. My local art museum has an adjudicated spring show, in which I have sporadically participated over the last decade, and I know if I planned ahead for it, I'd be motivated to make more work. A few summers ago, some friends and I planned a group show for a small local venue. Having the accountability of a group was essential for me to push through and make art, and ultimately, I came up with some of the best work I've made in several years. If you can dream it, you can do it, right? I know I've had that quote on a poster in my classroom at some point. Walk the talk.

4. Make time for art in your week

This is a practice that has made a world of difference for me this past year. In June, I had breast-reduction surgery, and I was laid up for almost the rest of the summer. Making art was about the only thing I had energy for during those first few weeks post-surgery, so I was forced to indulge myself in painting, Gelli printing, playing with watercolors and the myriad markers I've stockpiled. I even revamped my art website (well, started it anyway...that takes FOREVER, and I have miles to go). When school started, I made a point to continue my studio time for at least one day a week. Though it may only be for 20 minutes here and there, I've kept at it and nearly filled an entire sketchbook.



5. Find (and engage with) your tribe

This is one of my favorite “art” practices, and I always feel justified making time to hang out with my art/art teacher friends, since I’m supporting my creative identity and satisfying my penchant for being a social butterfly. Finding those people who get us, and who get what we do on a daily basis, can be a huge benefit for us; energetically, spiritually, emotionally, and practically. Most of

the inspiration I get for my own art is from collaboration with friends and colleagues. This is perhaps the main reason I attend the PAEA conference. Not only do we get Act 48 hours and great insights into new methods and materials, but we also get to hang out with our tribe, our people, and art-nerd out together!

