

2021-2022 CAPE Artist/Researcher Program Research Summary

## Understanding Agency Across Space and Time in Arts Integrated Learning

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In the 2021-2022 school year, after a year and a half of school closures, teachers and students had to process how to be together in physical classrooms again. In CAPE partnerships, classrooms are regularly reimaged through the integration of contemporary art practices – the return was another opportunity for teachers and teaching artists to collaboratively explore how to reconstruct classroom space based on what was learned from the pandemic. Remote learning was characterized at times by black boxes, silence, limited materials, absence, and isolation. At the same time, during remote learning, we found CAPE's partners to attune projects toward student engagement, expand what participation could look like, and unbound the use of material resources and learning time from norms. These practices revealed ways of using structures and materials to increase student engagement in ways that expanded agency for students, teachers, and teaching artists.

This year's Artist/Researcher Partners Program research explored how two teaching artists, Gina and Jordan, made sense of pre-pandemic, remote learning, and current in-person classroom spaces. Through professional development and research activities, we discussed and made art around what they did not want to reproduce, what they wanted to recreate, and what they wanted to reimagine. To explore the dimensions of classroom space, we discussed the varied structural and material conditions across time. We also discussed how they perceived their own agency and their students' agency to shape these conditions. It was important to explore agency across space and time because the ability to understand how structures and materials can limit or expand agency creates the opportunity for teaching artists to reconsider their practices toward transformation. The following themes from the study describe how teaching artists understood agency by inquiry into the conditions of classrooms across space and time.

### Flexible Participation Structures

Partners wanted to support students learning together again by using collaboration in projects. Teaching artists described flexible approaches to structuring groups. With upper elementary students, Gina created the opportunity for students to determine when to work individually or in groups. This decision emerged from a realization during school closures that participation can and should look different based on student needs. With first graders who did not have opportunities for socializing in person for Kindergarten, Jordan structured different stages where collaborative groups changed to cultivate unexpected social connections between students who may not typically interact or had previously not perceived their commonalities.

### Physical Space as Part of Design

Teaching artists used the physical space to expand learning possibilities within and beyond classroom walls. The heightened awareness of physical space emerged from the isolation of remote learning and a reconsideration of the

#### Gina's Reflections

Pre-pandemic Classroom Space

Desks or tables put together in "pods." Great for small group collaboration. Could create situations of exclusion, or individuals not getting enough solo time.

Orderly; Students mostly staying in seats; Materials delivered to them.



2021-2022 Classroom Space

Used outdoors as a project space

Students were more mobile in the classroom, getting up to gather materials, etc.

