

Professional Biography for Tamara Draper

“Mrs. Draper cares about every student that comes into her room, and I can tell her anything and she will listen at anytime. She loves what she does, that's what makes her such a great teacher.” This is part of a recent letter from a student of mine. She sums me up, probably better than I could myself. I believe in our Districts theme: SAFE, VALUED, LOVED and I love working with students and creating art. Showing students that they can be successful and creative, is what drives my passion for everything I do. Students come into my classroom and they will feel safe from all their daily struggles, and be shown that their opinions and ideas are valued as they develop their self-esteem and self-worth. Once the basic needs are met, we delve into cross-curricular studies from ancient times to present, and look at how we connect our learning to other subjects. I believe that students need to learn these connections in order for them to find personal meaning in the art they create. Allowing students to bring their art into the real world and learning about showing it and selling it makes it meaningful in a real world way. Using community service work also shows kids that their art can make a difference when it comes to the lives of others.

In my many years of teaching, I have always pushed myself to learn new things and strive to be the best teacher possible. As I continue to grow as a teacher, I have gone back to school and completed my Masters in Gifted and Talented Education through Grand Valley State University. This has helped me in so many ways when it comes to meeting the personal needs of my students. My family has been a huge support system for me, through the many extra duties that I choose to take on. Whether it's continuing my education, working on my own art, volunteering on MAEA conference steering committees, getting involved and putting together large community service projects like the 100 Tables Project, and my most recent addition being the MAEA Middle Level Division Co-chair, I feel all of these aspects of my life are what make me the best teacher I can be.