

Kate Oulton

4th–6th grade Art
Chargin Falls Intermediate
School
Chargin Falls, OH



Chargin Falls Intermediate School is one of four schools in the Chargin Falls Exempted Village Schools district, located six miles east of Cleveland, Ohio. The district has aimed to integrate technology into its instructional practices in ways that bolster content acquisition and teach 21st century learning skills. Every student in the district receives a district-owned Chromebook and is able to take the device home. The computers are used in a variety of ways in the classroom, with a focus on providing students with multiple opportunities to research, collaborate and create. As Kate Oulton describes, teachers have different approaches to how they use technology. She has focused on the flipped classroom approach in her art class for students in grades 4-6.

“I love my flipped classroom. A flipped classroom has allowed us to maximize time on task in Art. Students are never waiting around because they are ahead or behind. Before I changed my approach, I found that I was constantly repeating myself, whether it was specific instructions on a project, or how to wash a paintbrush. I started out making videos on my computer’s web cam and broke every project down into steps. A student would watch the introductory video, watch a technique video, do the task, get checked, and repeat this process.

A big thing in our district this past year (school year 17–18) has been that we have even fewer contact minutes due to being in a swing space while they build our new school. This has made the flipped classroom even more useful. I have had to pare down some projects to accommodate the shortened periods. I am still creating my own videos, but I’ve moved to an external mic and Ipevo Point 2 view camera for better video and audio quality. I highly recommend using an external mic and camera if you can. They’re nothing fancy, but make it a lot easier for kids to get the content. Also, using the Ipevo on a tripod lets me do an aerial viewpoint which makes it easier to see what’s going on. This is also good

because only my hands are in the picture, so the video doesn’t age.

Behavior and engagement are the best they’ve ever been, and student ownership and responsibility has dramatically increased since I started flipping my classroom. I am free to help my students with authentic creative problem solving rather than repeating myself constantly. Before the flipped classroom, I had students asking me all the time “Is this right?” and “Is this good?” But this is art—there is no wrong or right when creating! After I started using the flipped classroom model, I found I was getting more questions like “Can I try this?” or “Can I do it this way instead?” This has helped students create more authentic art that they can call their own.

The flipped classroom has a lot of potential to enable organic projects and allow for diversity in student artwork. Discipline-based art ed can sometimes focus less on creative and artistic behaviors and more on technique and end product. Conversely, the growing movement of choice-based art education truly honors all students as artists instead of telling them exactly what they will create and how to create it. Students make art that is important to them, and they figure out how to do it.

The most difficult part is making sure kids do their videos for homework and developing accountability for this. Students are all going through projects at a different pace. I created a calendar that would act as a pacing guide for them, but still with some flexibility. I posted this calendar in Google Classroom as well as having a physical calendar in the classroom. We talk about where they should be in the project, and then I give a soft deadline and hard deadline one week later. This gives them a chance to work on their time management and have some control over their pace.

It would help me if other teachers were doing flipped classroom in my district. Our district is 1:1 with Chromebooks, but right now I think I'm the only completely flipped classroom. It would be nice to be able to collaborate and also not be the first and only. The district is very supportive and all the teachers are Google certified, but I have not had any professional development that is specifically geared towards blended learning models.

It was a massive amount of work at first. I wish I had started earlier in the summer. It would have made the transition easier because I make all of my

own videos. I also wish I had known how to create digital assessments the first year because that has streamlined grading significantly. I have almost 500 students come through my classroom each school year, and this has made assessment and organization much easier and efficient.

After a few years with this model, this year (2017–18) I piloted some projects that involved a lot more student choice than previously. I opened up the requirements for the assignments and used the videos less as necessary steps and more as reference material. For example, students might have to make a project using at least three painting or drawing techniques and telling a story. I might provide videos on ten techniques and multiple videos about different ways artists tell stories. The students choose what looks interesting and move through their project with support from these resources. I will also add that giving more choice slows the process of making the artwork. Kids have to work harder to generate ideas and experiment to get the results they want, so it takes more time. Using videos to support choice has been an excellent and natural move for us. ■