The **Open Studio Process** combines writing and reflection with painting, drawing, collage and sculpture. Self-expression takes precedence over technique, and the art that is produced is not evaluated. Students are encouraged to explore how making art impacts their own emotional landscape. Facilitators work alongside the class, providing a model for creative exploration. There is no commenting or critiquing in the studio.

The **Open Studio Process Method:**

- **Stating an Intention.** To set the stage for creativity, students document how they feel in the moment.
- **Making Art.** Techniques in a variety of mediums are introduced.
- **Witnessing.** Artists use their work as a springboard to reflection.
- **Summarizing.** Artists show their work. They have the option to share their writing.

The goals are to:

- Safely explore and express complex or difficult emotions
- Promote sound decision making
- Manage stress and challenging life transitions
- Improve self-esteem and increase self-awareness
Every class begins with each person formulating and writing what we call an "Intention." This is how we focus our creativity and aim it at what we want it to help us with. It's a statement of what we choose to experience, as if it were already happening.

We use present tense statements: "I + action verb... or "I am..."
- For example: "I will relax" >> "I relax"
- "I want to get more clarity..." >> "I get more clarity about... (a problem, a person, a situation, etc)..."
- "I choose to..."

Your Intention determines whether your Process is creative problem-solving or mindfulness meditation or energetic play -- it can be about anything.

We use positive language, instead of "not" statements, because it's more powerful to state clearly what we do want.
For example: "I am not worried" >> "I am confident" or "I am calm"

An intention can be used to make a shift or to go deeper into where we are now.
- For example: Either "I release stress..." or "I explore what my anxiety has to teach me."

Once we've written our intention, we just put it aside. We trust that the information is "in there" and that we don't need to think about it as we make art.
Witness Writing

Next, in a process called "Witness writing," participants write about their work quickly, spontaneously, without censoring.

Using their artwork as a springboard, each participant begins to put words to what showed up in their art. There is no wrong way to do witness writing – correct spelling, punctuation, etc. don't matter. This writing is for yourself.

You can write what you see when you look at the art, how it felt making it, what you think or feel or wonder about it now.

You can ask your art a question and see what pops into your head – associations, a string of words, a poem, anything.

Whatever words come are welcomed. Just keep your pen moving for the whole time.

Sharing (no comments/critique)

At the end of each class, participants point out or pass their artwork, and choose whether to read aloud all, part, or none of what each has written on the page, without any additional comments or explanations. This is an opportunity to hear your own words come back to you. Neither the participants nor the facilitators ever comment in any way upon artwork or writing. Not having any comments allows us to be more attentive and take in each others’ images and words more fully.

SEL Visual Arts Programs in Schools

Social and emotional learning (SEL) takes as a premise that a child’s well-being depends on emotional health.

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, it is the process through which children acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to:

◆ Manage emotions
◆ Achieve goals
◆ Show empathy
◆ Establish and maintain positive relationships
◆ Make responsible decisions
Open Studio is the first art-based organization in Illinois to develop a SEL curriculum that includes a creative methodology. The course meets both SEL and visual arts goals for all students, including those with communication disorders, autism and special needs.

"Learning through art is especially valuable for children who may experience difficulty communicating feelings verbally." Katie Smith, Assistant Director of Evanston Citizens for Appropriate Special Education

"Students of all abilities are engaged throughout the art activities, which is rare due to the students various needs and multiple levels." Darlene Wolford, King Arts Teacher

"Having OSP in my classroom has been a wonderful opportunity for my students to explore art through an open-ended forum. Much of our school day is highly structured, and so the opportunity to have open choice and expression through something as concrete and tangible as making art, is unlike many other experiences." Leah Johnston, Lincoln School, Primary CDC Teacher

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<th>Other programs available</th>
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<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Renewal Workshops offered quarterly</td>
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<td>Insert Dates</td>
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<td>Extensive facilitator training program 5-days in June</td>
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<td>Contact us if you are interested in bringing the SEL visual arts curriculum to your school!</td>
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