

Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Julie Gelsing and I have your son/daughter in Sculpture or Ceramic Pottery this semester and am honored to join them in their artful journey. This year will mark the twenty-first year of my own learning journey, and I'm looking forward to sharing it with your son/daughter.

### What I want you to know is that...

- **I care about your child.** They are not a number or a “seat-filler”; They are a human being. I will strive diligently to get to know them as an individual person, so I may best help them as an individual artist and learner. I believe all artists come from different places socially, emotionally, academically, and creatively, and I will meet them wherever they are and push them to persevere forward to grow.
- **I believe that your artist owns their learning.** This is not passing the buck, I simply believe that if your artist is going to make the most of their learning opportunities, then they must take ownership of being an artist.
  - *To your artist: “From the deepest recesses of my teacher being, I believe that this is the key to true learning. You have to own it, for when you own it, you take responsibility for it. I am responsible for joining and aiding you in your journey, and I enthusiastically own that. But you are responsible for your learning, my young artist friend.”*
- **I value learning over grading.** In the past few years, I have made major strides in providing an approach to assessment that places greater emphasis on learning, not numbers, averaging or grading. Much of this has been confirmed in the findings of other researchers and authors like Carol Dweck, whose book *Mindset* introduced the world to the concept of a growth mindset, and Daniel Pink, whose book *Drive* argued that extrinsic rewards and punishments actually stifle creativity, higher-order thinking, and intrinsic motivation. Since I hope to engender the dispositions of a growth mindset and intrinsic motivation in the artists, I have worked to eliminate any practices that work against students developing them.
  - Coaches don't put a score on the scoreboard during practices. Coaches do everything they can to develop players in the skills and concepts they will need to succeed. To grade or rate them sends the subtle message that their current achievement is fixed. This is the exact opposite mentality that is needed to sustain growth and improvement. The goal is to “keep the conversation going” as long as possible.
  - **R.O.L.E.:** (Results Only Learning Environment) My purpose is to help your artist grow and become familiar with problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Each will be met at their current ability level and encouraged to show growth in their learning. The studio is a ROLE classroom which promotes feedback and conversations about learning instead of point values on individual assignments. A ROLE classroom seeks to encourage students to take control of their own learning while developing individual skills and a desire to take creative risks and to be reflective of their artwork, their development and their studio habits of mind. While I know this is not how you or I were graded in high school, my goal is to help students form personal goals, formulate and use strategies, assess the results, and strategize a new plan until the goal is met.
  - **Reflection:** Each Monday, artists will enter a blog post about their week in review. This will include ah-ha moments/ frustrations of learning about materials, processes, and techniques in their deliberate practice/ artwork creation/ artistic thinking process to create works of art; problems and solutions encountered during the week; and anything they would like to share pertaining to their growth as an artist. This is to be completed on Monday (almost like a weekly quiz). I read the artist's blog and use a CODE listed in mapping preference on Sapphire. Coding can also be found on the syllabus webpage under the topic grading. The expectation of each artist will be to (CO)mplete this and show their learning each week. This is not a direct reflection of a traditional accumulated grade and is NOT averaged in Sapphire; they should be collecting '(CO)mpletions.
  - **Mid-Term/ Final:** Each artist will complete a Student-Led Conference and defend the growth through the required units and blog posts they have completed throughout the marking period/ semester. The grade we enter into

Sapphire will be a joint effort; mid-term (less formal) and Final (formal). They will use the data they have from their blog posts, studio habits of mind learning google form, artistic thinking process, unit completions, time management etc.

- **I encourage and value your role as a partner.** Optimal learning requires a shared responsibility among art facilitators, parents, and artists. We have to partner in this together. If you are interested in visiting Studio 506; You are always welcome. (please schedule this with me, so I can communicate with the office)
- **Outside Class Work.** It is encouraged for artists to work in their sketchbooks or complete online unit completion work when they are not in the studio. In the studio, work will be completed and I am available to converse and provide feedback on skills and techniques. I also ask artists to spend 10-15 minutes of reading (an article)/ watching (video)/ listening (podcast) about ART each night. Please partner with me by encouraging your artist to complete artful learning. 10-15 minutes a day, 5 days a week will help them be a more informed artist.
- **Open Studio:** All works of art are able to be completed during class if the artist focuses on completing the process. The studio is open at 7:35 a.m. every day and after school till 4 p.m. Most supplies and tools can travel if needed. Supplies to complete works of art are available to every artist; Some artists choose to use or purchase additional supplies or may need to supplement if the use beyond what is available. (potters are only provided 25 lbs for the semester; they may purchase more if desired)
- **Communication is important.** Just as I presented an open-door invite above, I also offer communication assurance. If there is ever anything that you wish to address with me, please do so. My contact information is below. A preferred form of communication is email.
- **“The more you do, the better you get’** Twenty years into this journey, I do not have all the answers. I am just seeking to do better each day, each year. My mantra. “The more you do, the better you get.” And this year is no different. I will fail and make mistakes, but I expect and accept that because I know I will learn from it each and every time. This is how I approach my learning. It is how I will ask your child to approach his or her learning.

As the adults in the party, these are the things I would want you to know as we set out on our own journey together. I am keenly aware of the trust that you place in me for your child’s care and education each day when she or he walks out the door. I, too, am a parent and have the same expectations for my daughter. And so, please know that I take my role in your child’s artistic journey very seriously, and I will do my best to see him or her safely to the destination at semester’s end. Thank you for joining me this year. I hope it is a “best year yet” for you and your child.

Sincerely,

Julie Gelsinger

[julie\\_gelsinger@southwesternsd.org](mailto:julie_gelsinger@southwesternsd.org) ; (717) 633-4807 x21506

The following are articles or books I have read over the year to improve my practice as an artist and facilitator of learning to the artists and individuals I encounter.

[Dylan Wiliam: Is the feedback you’re giving helping or hindering?](#)

[Carol Dweck: The power of believing you can improve \(TED Talk\)](#)

[Daniel Pink: Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose](#)

[Daniel Pink: The puzzle of motivation \(TED Talk\)](#)

[Joy Kirr: Feedback in lieu of grading in ELA](#)

[Dr. Tae: Can skateboarding save our schools? \(TED Talk\)](#)