Design is meant to communicate and bring art and beauty to the common person. I believe that all art, no matter how abstract or complex can be understood by everyone, at least on some level. Artists bring a different perspective to communities. They are the problem solvers, the experimenters and those not scared to fail, bringing a life and a connection to communities through non-verbal visual or auditory languages. Teaching children these skills can create stronger and more creative communities.

For children art offers a space where they can control their work. Cookie cutter crafts with determined finished products are detrimental to children’s creativity. If we always expect to make the same thing as everyone else it creates a false sense of sameness and equality. I’m a big advocate for free play in the arts. Creating ‘Makerspaces’ for children to explore their interests and create what they are interested in. In these spaces the teacher functions as a mentor and a resource not an authority or the person in control of the project. They are meant to guide students to the answers that will best, and most exciting for them.

I’ve noticed, especially with older students their need for hand holding through the arts, they often carry with them a fear of failure. We need to continue to teach and encourage exploration throughout a student’s school career, even if it may lead to failure. This is best done through the arts, where failure is part of the process, instead of math or science where often failure can be seen as unacceptable.

Art and design open up a world of possibilities, a world of exploration and self-discovery. They create critically thinking people, problem solvers, and visual planners. Art and design encourages exploration, process and taking risks. It allows students freedom and control over their own creative voice often leading to more confident student, more creative adults and therefore stronger communities.