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#### EDUCATION



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Laura J. Hetrick

Cover image: Illustration created for Art Education by Jay Ryan / The Bird Machine, 2015.

Above: Illustration by Shari Savage, page 24, for "The Yellow Brick Road to Licensure: Mentoring Student Teachers Through the Practicum Experience."

# Professional Development

## in Arts and Design Education:

### From Paradox to Purpose

n February 17, 2015, the Visiting Artist Lecture Series of the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University featured a talk by the engaging screen-print and poster artist Jay Ryan. During the subsequent Q&A, I asked him a question about the Arts and entrepreneurship, given the success of his printmaking business, The Bird Machine. Jay's response prompted me to further interview him as a means of introducing the authors assembled here, in what I have informally christened as "The Professional Development Issue." I also took the unusual step of asking Jay to interpret the long and winding road of professional development as the special guest cover artist for this unique issue.

Over the course of this issue, I present three essential road markers for the professional development of both the artist and the arts and design educator: paradox, peer mentoring, and purpose. I have asked Jay Ryan, as a contemporary artist, to reflect on each of these concepts as a means of both expounding their relevance and introducing the authors represented in this issue of Art Education. Jay Ryan first learned about screen-printing from Steve Walters at Screwball Press in late 1995, where they worked together until 1999—at which point Jay started The Bird Machine print shop in the basement of his apartment building. Currently located in the village of Skokie in Illinois, The Bird Machine began with clients like Jay's own rock band, his friends' bands, and the clubs where they played. By stumbling into the right place at the right time, Jay fell in with a new movement of screen-printed poster makers across the country and around the world. Paradoxically, Jay's prints aim to attain the same goals as other concert posters, but using raccoons and toasters instead of skulls, breasts, and hot rods.

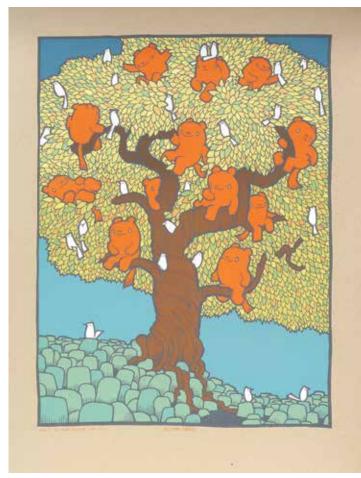


Jay Ryan, Fugazi / Shellac / The Ex, 2001. Screen-print, 18 x 24 inches.

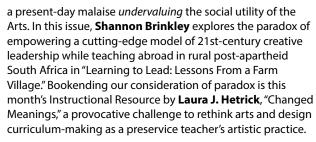
A paradox is something that seems self-contradictory. When I asked Jay to reflect on the importance of paradox in his own professional development, he cited his ongoing search for a balance in advertising his work and making it available to as wide an audience as reasonably possible. Jay, a screen-printer who has established a reputation for the use of hand-drawn text and a computer-free design process, adds:

Coming from a background of hand-made, non-mass-produced items that are associated with smaller musical subcultures, there is an associated value in the "specialness" of the print. There are only so many prints available to sell (dozens, or maybe hundreds), and they can't easily be replaced or reprinted. At the same time, I am running a corporation which has substantial bills to pay, and we have a relatively small audience, so it is in my interest to always be expanding or at least involving our audience in a moderate, controlled way. (personal communication, March 6, 2015)

Just like the artists we model our practices after, studio arts and design instructors must often create paradox as we go. We face an inherent contradiction—our charge is to provide curricular catalysts for self-initiated and serendipitous creative behavior while working within both a schooling paradigm that overvalues standardization and generalizability, and

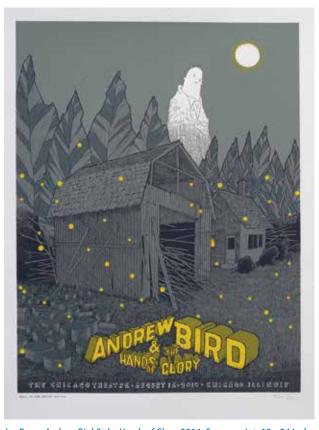


Jay Ryan, Autumn Arrives, 2013. Screen-print, 18 x 24 inches.



I went on to ask Jay Ryan how peer mentoring has aided him along his artistic and business journey. His response was insightful, especially to those of us with the tendency to be lone wolves in our approach to arts instruction, as well as in our professional development:

When speaking at universities, I always emphasize to students that one of the most important things they need to find after graduation is a community within which they can work in their medium. If you're a graphic designer, get a job with other graphic designers as fast as you can. If you're a painter, go in on a painting studio with other painters. I believe that the loss of one's peer group that comes with graduation is the single greatest impediment to continuing to make work.



Jay Ryan, Andrew Bird & the Hands of Glory, 2014. Screen-print, 18 x 24 inches.

For me, I finished school in May 1994 and wandered through various construction and woodworking jobs before stumbling into the group of goofballs who worked at Screwball Press and the adjacent Fireproof Press at the beginning of 1996. The motivation, feedback, and constant stream of new ideas was tiring at the time, but in hindsight it was probably one of the best times in my life (possibly due to the fact that I was 23)! We worked around the clock, making it up as we went along.

Later, after I had started my own shop and we had started to recognize a national (and international) online community of poster makers via Gigposters.com, we created a series of poster conventions starting in the fall of 2002. We call these conventions Flatstock, and this series has been very successful, now with annual shows in Austin, Barcelona, Chicago, Seattle, and Hamburg. We have a relatively tight international community of people who work for the same bands, in the same medium, and the exchange of ideas continues to be furious. These people are, to a large degree, my audience. (personal communication, March 6, 2015)

This issue serves as a vantage point for viewing the benefits of peer mentoring from multiple perspectives. **Linda Whelihan** relates a candid narrative about how to build a

"Do-It-Yourself Professional Learning Community." **Shari L. Savage, Dennis Cannon**, and **Justin P. Sutters** build upon a central metaphor of the L. Frank Baum children's classic, exploring the twists and turns of "The Yellow Brick Road to Licensure: Mentoring Student Teachers Through the Practicum Experience." **Karin Tollefson-Hall** presents the benefits and challenges of "Building a Teaching Community Through Peer Mentoring." Alternatively, in "Two Women, One Shared Experience: A Mentorship Story," **Sarah Cress-Ackermann** and **Jelena Todorovich** offer up the eight principles they discovered in marking out the steps for an effective peer partnership.

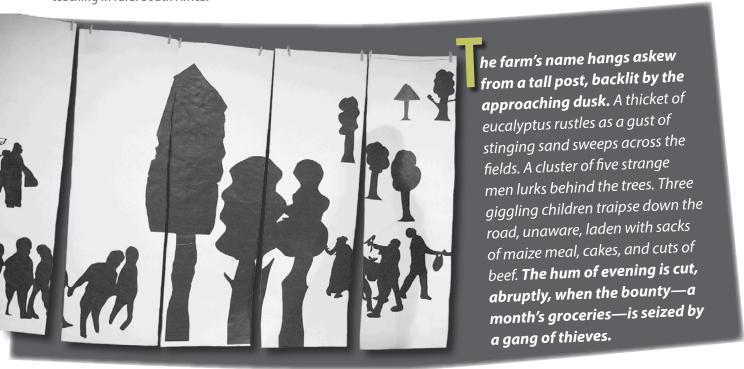
Ultimately, I came away from Jay Ryan's talk at Syracuse University with a clear sense of the strategic purpose with which he approached his work. When I asked him to elaborate a bit more, Jay revealed the ongoing tension between not wanting to be associated with bands or other entities whose work he doesn't like, while needing to make sure he can meet his payroll and put food on his family's table:

I believe that the work I do is wedged in a strange place—one foot in commercial [requirements and real-world demands], and the other as a reflection of me as a person, making something which smells a lot more like "Fine Art" (or however you want to label images which are made for the pleasure of the maker). As a result of this direct association between me as a person and the "art" I make, I feel that I need to consider who I am working for, and who I want to be associated with. (personal communication, March 6, 2015)

In line with Jay's principled pragmatism, in "Reflecting on Our Beliefs and Actions: Purposeful Practice in Art Education," **Paul E. Bolin** and **Kaela Hoskings** draw from writings in the field spanning from the mid-19th century to today in order to aid our wide array of readers in delineating individual and professional purpose: namely, why we do what we do, for whom, and toward what ends. Take from this issue whatever supplies you need and enjoy the journey ahead!

—James Haywood Rolling Jr., Editor

James Haywood Rolling Jr. is Dual Professor and Chair of Art Education in the School of Art/College of Visual and Performing Arts, and the Department of Teaching and Leadership/School of Education, Syracuse University, New York. E-mail: jrolling@syr.edu Student-led art allows students to work with others, take pride in their achievements, and build their self-esteem, as seen in this author's experience teaching in rural South Africa.



# **LEARNING** to **LEAD**: Lessons From a Farm Village



Figure 1. A student questioning community participants.

#### SHANNON BRINKLEY

This tense scene is staged by my students' dynamic, life-size artwork. Black cut-paper silhouettes, starkly displayed on white paper, reveal the grim tale (Figure 1). The artwork's narrative is based on secrets provided by the community; its conflict remains unresolved. The students have asked their audience—composed of community participants—to generate a positive resolution by adding a final scene to the artwork.

Students take their positions. They politely greet arriving guests by the art center's door. The students are anxious to start. Thabang turns down the music. Bonolo tweaks a curtain. The door closes as the students assemble at the front. Mpho is self-assured. A massive grin spreads across Thabang's face as he introduces the group. Struggling to be the center of attention, he nervously covers his eyes.

This is the culmination of 10 weeks of hard work. Over the course of preparing and leading this workshop for their community, my students revealed a heightened understanding of collaboration and demonstrated self-empowerment through self-reflection, as well as pride and passion for their artwork. Experience over these weeks showed me that supporting opportunities for student leadership can enable rich, complex results in the art classroom.

#### **The Farm Village**

Each kilometer south marks more distance from vibrant Johannesburg. Smoke stacks, the electric grid, and freeways are replaced by charred fields, cattle, and the derelict windmills of the Free State province. The road's surface crumbles with potholes. A dozen kilometers from the local town, the maize farm is tucked behind a vast pond. I first made this drive several years ago, as a wide-eyed American volunteer for the nonprofit arts organization Dramatic Need, which offers expression-based workshops to at-risk, rural youth and children (Figure 2).

In 2010, as an educator and manager, I was given the opportunity to further Dramatic Need's mission to provide a nonviolent, creative outlet for self-expression. I settled next to the colorful arts center in the heart of a small village on the farm, surrounded by a handful of my students' homes.

Families have lived in the village for generations. Until the fall of apartheid, the farm provided housing to most of its laborers. Because of rising labor costs and mechanization, many families now face underemployment. While the national unemployment rate of South Africa hovers around 24%, the people of the Free State suffer a distinctly rural plight, with a 35% unemployment rate (Statistics South Africa, 2014). I lived on the farm for almost 3 years and noticed the residual impacts of oppression and ongoing hardship, including economic disadvantage, health crises such as HIV and tuberculosis, a strapped education system, and a lack of upward mobility in the local workforce.

#### **The Saturday Class**

In this rural area, few opportunities exist for identifying leader-ship potential and honing unexposed leadership skills. As a teacher at Dramatic Need, I decided to form a Saturday class with adolescent farm residents. I invited children 11-15 years old to join, indicating that lessons would culminate with their leading an art workshop for their community. Our class of 6 students met for 3 hours every Saturday for 10 weeks. Of the 11 national languages, students spoke a mixture of two: local Sesotho and isiXhosa. These students had participated in a variety of workshops I had taught previously and often engaged with me outside of class in my garden; we entered into this new undertaking with a foundation of trust and understanding.

#### **Leadership in Context**

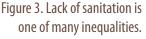
South Africa is infamous for its legacy of impeding inequalities, even in the post-apartheid era (Figure 3). Fingers point toward lack of leadership on numerous levels, from top-elected representatives to union workers to teachers.

Today's youth live in a more fragmented society than previous generations involved in the freedom struggles (Dubula, Nkondlo, & Pelser, 2006). Confusion surrounds today's framework of freedom—where political strife, corruption, and lack of governmental responsibility cloud the idea of what leadership means. The art classroom is a venue for generating new perceptions of leadership. As bell hooks (1994) affirmed:



Figure 2. Dramatic Need's Piet Patsa Community

Arts Centre. Used with permission of Dramatic Need.





The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves, and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. (p. 207)

Activating the space of art classrooms for students to develop community among themselves can have broad implications for life beyond the classroom. A few weeks into the Saturday class, one ebullient youth, Bonolo, intimated how she interacted with younger children: "When I shouted at them, they would shout back." Mpho, a confident speaker, indicated her competitiveness: "Every time I wanted to be the best and biggest. When someone would come up with a plan... I would always insist mine is right even if I knew someone else had a better answer." Gude (2007) advocates, "Young artists must also learn to construct new spaces in which caring, courageous communities can emerge" (p. 13). By connecting the problems of the bigger picture to my local community, I hoped my students would be able to recognize their facility as leaders. I endeavored to understand their perceptions of themselves as leaders before, during, and after leading an interactive art experience. My definition of leadership evolved throughout; based on Thurber and Zimmerman (2002), I identified an empowered leadership model—an empowered leader maintains collaboration and caring while working toward a common purpose (pp. 19-20).

#### Planning for Leadership

Within my learning unit, one of my main aims was facilitating collaborative practices to create opportunities for students to build the self-esteem required to lead a workshop together in front of family, peers, and neighbors. Early in my planning, I entitled the culminating workshop an "interactive art experience," which incorporated student-guided audience interactions with their silhouette artworks. I focused the unit around the Big Idea of conflict, which tied directly to the need for resolution explored in the approach of Forum Theatre (UNESCO & CCIVS, 2006; Walker, 2001). Since my students faced measurable real-world conflicts, I wanted to link a concept in art that could enable reflective and critical thinking in their own lives. I prepared my students

to present a narrative artwork based on community-generated narratives; when leading the interactive art experience, this allowed them to explore a deeper connection with their community, to whom the artwork was shown.

#### An Interactive Art Experience

I first discovered Forum Theatre in Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed² and heard of its success in communities affected by HIV and AIDS. "The purpose of Forum Theatre is to create a space where all people have the possibility and the right to be heard" (UNESCO & CCIVS, 2006, p. 7). Forum Theatre is a participatory model of drama presenting real-life scenarios for spectators to contemplate. A group of actors present an oppression-based conflict through a play, which ends without a resolution. After the conflict is presented, the actors dialogue with the community audience to find various solutions for the conflict; often this dialogue inspires transformative, everyday problem solving.

I wanted to apply Forum Theatre to visual arts forms as a way to invite audience participation in the student-led workshop. When I introduced the students to the artwork of Kara Walker, a contemporary artist who often employs themes of conflict, we formed a connection to the use of conflict resolution in Forum Theatre. The use of silhouettes in Walker's work formed a practical connection for students, enabling access to create more complicated structures through simple shadow projections. It occurred to me that silhouette tableaux, created with shadow projections on a white sheet by performers, would allow a flexible, quick way for community members to participate in resolving the students' artworks. The use of silhouette tableaux was an aesthetically feasible device for the audience to engage with the students' original cut-paper artworks.

#### Community-Generated Narratives

During the unit, I prompted the students to collect anonymous community secrets to inspire their own artwork. This approach was based on McConaughy's lesson—Hopes, Wishes, and Regrets—and Frank Warren's popular Post Secret project (Hafeli & McConaughy, 2010, p. 129). Including the collection of secrets in the unit design enabled two possibilities: First, the students were able to incorporate their audience into their artistic process, enabling them to close the gap between artist and audience, a



Figure 4. Students solicit the community for anonymous secrets.

## Problem solving in groups often means confronting tough questions and complex life issues...

relationship not dissimilar to that of leader and followers. Second, this allowed students to generate ideas pertaining to their community's issues. Gude (1990) has stated that teachers need to be flexible in separating their own values and beliefs to enable conscious choices in curricular and teaching selections (p. 28). By putting the content and meaning of the artwork in my students' hands, I was able to minimize my involvement in framing their lessons from my point of view, allowing them to frame their own choices.

When I introduced students to Warren's Post Secret project, we discussed concepts of anonymity, loyalty, and trust. My students wrote letters to their community, soliciting their secrets—explicitly noting that the secrets might be used as the premise for a public artwork. The students emphasized that the secrets should be submitted without names and would be treated confidentially. Two students taped together a small box, leaving a thin opening where folded secrets could be slipped in. The students provided each household with a letter and displayed the sealed box (Figure 4). They then trotted away, giving each household a few days to ponder their secrets.

The following Saturday, we eagerly opened the box. Before performing analysis, we recalled our vow to keep the content of the secrets safe. The students were aware of the precious nature of the community's trust, yet they were curious about the identity of each secret's author. Folded paper slips revealed simple wishes, while others exposed very sensitive life stories. Many disclosed personal struggles. We reviewed the idea of conflict and grouped the secrets accordingly.



In preparation for creating a collaborative artwork, each student chose a conflict-oriented secret that moved him or her. The secrets included loneliness, personal injury, and robbery. As a group, they merged their various secrets into one narrative and explored the narrative in a sequence of three artworks.

#### **Cutting, Constructing, and Leading Together**

From collaborative exchanges, students learn to test their own ideas of self with those of the larger group and to connect with new perspectives (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2002; Hafeli & McConoughy, 2010; Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, & Agbhari, 2004; Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009; Stephens, 2006). Learning to relinquish personal desires and working toward a common goal allowed them to transcend to a new level of maturity. One student, Mpho, reflected after the final interactive art experience:

No one wanted to be perfect—when someone had a problem, we would help them, and afterward we would make sure there were no hard feelings. When we went home, we asked each other if anyone had a problem—everyone was fine.

It becomes easy to follow narrow-minded personal agendas when one is not interrupted by different perspectives (Gude, 1990). Collaboration is not a simple task, yet it lays the groundwork for a deeper learning experience and builds the foundation for a richer sense of community. When working in a group, students become more aware of others' needs. Contemplating the takeaway value of our classes, Thabang shared that he learned to listen to others, respect different views, and treat people well regardless of personal connections. Bonolo learned lessons in respect and reconsidering personal authority: "I will take away that we must respect each other and not shout at each other. When we make a problem, we can fix it altogether. And we cannot fight and can't tell someone, 'No, don't do that.""

Collaboration best occurs when students are given opportunities to interact with one another through discussions and the common goal of problem solving. The class was designed to give students opportunities to work together often. By building a sense of community through collaboration, I aimed for the students to feel supported by their peers when leading others in the final interactive art experience. The student artwork was a collaborative effort from beginning to finish. The scale of the artwork necessitated a group effort (Figures 5 & 6). Sharing their artwork with their community also meant that students had a passionate desire to take part in the art process.

Figure 5. Peers work together on layout.



Figure 6. Collaboratively hanging their artwork.

Figure 7. Students strategize collaboratively.

I found that collaboration came naturally to the students when they were working to share their knowledge. Milbrandt et al. (2004) urged teachers to facilitate student ownership of their problem solving by presenting questions to their classmates, enabling the classroom community to participate in creating possible solutions (p. 24). The result of peer teaching and support during problem solving is that students learn to empathize with their peers in profound ways (p. 23). Problem solving in groups often means confronting tough questions and complex life issues; when students battle their way through collaborative discussion, they connect with authentic concerns (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2002).

Collaboration is not seamless or easy. Skirmishes and tattling often derive from students' interactions with different opinions and a variety of agendas. During one class, I noticed Thabang's expression—stern with a furrowed brow. I opened my mouth to speak, and his face crumpled. As two fat tears rolled down his cheeks, he buried his head in his arms on the table. As can often be the case in a multilingual environment, the clash between Thabang and Mpho unraveled before I grasped how it had started. As it turned out, a squabble had erupted when students did not share their supplies with one another.

The two students engaged in reflection and apology later on; having a class goal to lead a workshop for the community prompted them to resolve their frustrations and to humbly put aside self-serving needs. The students were advocates of working together. After the final interactive art experience, Thabang shared, "That evening the group worked as a team. There weren't any misunderstandings. The successful part was our teamwork."

#### **Finale**

Crisp silhouettes announce the first part of the students' constructed story as the audience bears the summer's waning heat. Bonolo opens a discussion about the first of three artworks (Figure 8). Bonolo's primary role is to ask questions and to involve the community in reading their visual story. At times, Bonolo struggles to elicit the answers she desires from the audience, but she is patient. At one point Mpho steps in with a suggestion to redirect the audience to the focus of the artwork. The community is talkative and vibrant. The momentum of the evening is palpable. The audience completes their silhouette tableaux (Figures 9 & 10). Panting with exhilaration, everyone takes their seats for the closing discussion of the evening.







TOP: Figure 8. Bonolo introduces the interactive art experience.

MIDDLE: Figure 9. The audience considers a possible ending to the students' artwork.

BOTTOM: Figure 10. The audience resolves the artwork through shadow projections.

#### **Emerging Student Characteristics**

Change. Self-reflection. Awareness. Consideration. Pride. Passion. These words peppered my notes increasingly as I worked with the students. Thabang shared his acquired self-confidence and focus through group work. Bonolo revealed learning to follow through on her statements with action. Mpho became increasingly reflective: "I didn't set a good example for others to follow. I was just the leader that I told myself I was." She became aware that self-reflection takes conscious thought and time, specifying, "Something changed because I was giving my followers time to speak and to hear what they feel. But before, when I was speaking with my followers, I didn't care how they felt or what their ideas were." The combined process of working together and leading the interactive art experience enabled my students to have deeper insights into themselves, cultivating budding pride and passion for their artwork. On our last night, Mpho declared, "It was a great pleasure for us to have you as participants because it was a chance for us to change roles." They were proud to have shared their work; more importantly, this evening stamped an unparalleled sense of achievement in their art experience.

"We taught them something they'd never known before," Bonolo shared. Milbrandt et al. (2004) recommended that educators give students opportunities to share their knowledge in formal and informal capacities (p. 24). In our conversations together, the idea of sharing their learning with the elder community was completely new to the students. Mpho told me that her grandmother had held low expectations and was greatly surprised by the outcome. Not only did the interactive art experience mark new learning territory for the students, but it also advocated the importance of arts learning within the community. Bonolo revealed, "They were so appreciative of us. They said we are great and they said they will never say that we aren't allowed to go to the arts center again."

#### **Implications**

The lessons learned from the Saturday class spawn many lingering questions for future consideration in art education. How can collaborative practices in art classrooms impact student capacity for taking on leadership roles? How does ownership of knowledge influence students' desires to share their learning with others? How might this contribute to student perceptions of leadership? In what ways can interactive art experiences be used to advocate for art? What other lessons could be learned from inviting community participation in student artwork?



Figure 11. Classmates counter-balance in a collaboration game.

Building opportunities for student-led art events, like the interactive art experience, can impact students' capacities to work with others, take pride in their achievements, and build upon their self-esteem. This, in turn, can help to construct healthy classroom communities in South Africa. Similarly, there are global and cross-curricular indications that opportunities for student leadership can benefit other cultures and non-art classrooms. Presently, limited research-based literature focuses on student leadership opportunities, presenting a ripe prospect for teacher-researchers to explore.

Students need opportunities to define and practice leadership, reflect on their own capacities as leaders, collaborate noncompetitively with others, and engage as leaders in projects about which they are passionate. The emergence of student collaboration, self-reflection, and pride is an exciting consequence of promoting leadership opportunities in art classrooms.

Smiling broadly, the students conclude the evening in joint song. The melody blends into strains of humming, clapping, and stomping—mirroring the audience's appreciation. The night comes to a close as participants sashay out the door.

Shannon Brinkley is a Visual Arts Educator at Cairo American College, Egypt; and former Visual Arts Educator at International School of Hout Bay, South Africa. E-mail: skbrinkley@gmail.com

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#### **AUTHOR NOTE**

The research for this article was conducted as part of the author's Master of Arts in Art Education degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). More information about the charity, Dramatic Need, and opportunities for volunteering is available at www.dramaticneed.org

#### **ENDNOTE**

- All personal communication, observations, reflections, and interviews are from August 2012 to January 2013. The research for this article was conducted as part of the author's Master of Arts in Art Education degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA).
- <sup>2</sup> See www.theatreoftheoppressed.org

Art educators form a do-it-yourself professional learning community by meeting informally in a museum to view exhibits, collaborate, brainstorm, and dialogue.



#### LINDA WHELIHAN

y dining room table was covered with a kaleidoscope of colored papers, felt, markers, and wire. The available materials all related to artwork on exhibit at our local contemporary art museum. Gathered around the table, our cohort of four elementary art educators reached for supplies, nimbly manipulating them and responding to the work we viewed an hour earlier at the museum. As Henri Matisse remarked, "Creative people are curious, flexible, persistent, and independent with a tremendous spirit of adventure and love of play." In our classrooms, we encourage these traits in our students by setting up supplies and facilitating discussions that lead to inquiry and discovery, but how often do we make time to nurture ourselves through such artistic explorations? Our group had come together to form a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) professional learning community, taking initiative to craft situations that would allow us to share our teaching experiences and to grow both artistically and professionally.

The DIY movement, originally aimed at encouraging the can-do spirit of the intrepid homeowner, has expanded its reach and is now mentioned in books, TED Talks, and discussions referring to ordinary people directing their passion and dedication toward solving a whole host of challenging global issues including hunger, poverty, and education. As a teacher, I felt the need for professional engagement that I was not experiencing in my workday or as part of my district's scheduled professional development days. Prompted by a graduate course I was taking on the study of qualitative research, I contacted three other elementary art educators and invited them to join me in forming a DIY professional learning community where there would be opportunities for artistic investigation, discussion, and collaboration. Educators have adopted the term professional learning communities to describe collaborative groups within schools that meet regularly across grade levels and disciplines for reflective dialogue addressing concerns of the school community. Coming together once a month, we formed a supportive learning group—our own version of a professional learning community, independent from the prescribed protocol of professional development at our individual schools. In this article, I describe our collaboration and discuss the insights our successes might provide for art educators' professional development practices in the future.

Professional collaboration, as defined by Leonard and Leonard (2003), "is considered to occur when teachers work together regularly, share their knowledge, contribute ideas, and develop plans for achieving educational goals—that is, principally in terms of improved student learning" (p. 3). I thrive in collaborative environments, but my jam-packed daily schedule leaves me little time to interact with fellow educators within my school. Most of my conversations about cross-curricular connections occur when I run into classroom teachers as I am racing down the hallway, artwork shoved under my arm and pushpins in the corner of my mouth. Because I am the only art teacher at two small Vermont schools, discussions about curriculum and current trends in pedagogy are nonexistent. I felt disconnected, overscheduled, and uninspired. Acting on my desire to connect with my peers, I approached other art teachers about joining me in an experiment in collaboration where we could do just as Leonard and Leonard prescribed: share, contribute ideas, and work toward the development of a unit of study that would be relevant to our students. Beyond that, I was hoping to invigorate my own teaching practice and to strengthen the larger community by fortifying the ties among teachers, students, and our local contemporary art museum. Our meetings would begin at the museum and have follow-up time at my home to share insights, make curricular connections, and learn from one another.

Our trial collaboration took place one Sunday afternoon per month for 3 months. I served dual roles as a participant and facilitator, setting up times and dates and sending out reminders for our meetings. We met at the museum, toured the exhibits, and brainstormed. We spent time studying the art, using it to inspire our discussions and investigations of materials. Our collaboration varied in some ways from more traditional professional development activities, and I believe that those differences contributed to the success of our efforts.

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### Professional Development for Art Educators

Many articles highlight art educators experiencing feelings of isolation in their professional lives (Cohen-Evron, 2002; Hord, 2009; Sabol, 2006). At the elementary school level, there is often only one art teacher who teaches every child at the school. In many cases, the art room is physically removed from the academic classes, setting up yet another barrier to communication and collaboration. In Vermont, where I live, it is also common for art teachers to travel to three or four different schools a week, transporting art materials and lesson plans in cars and on carts, with no quality time to spend with classroom teachers or other art-teaching peers. It makes sense for teachers to be grouped for professional learning by the subject or grade levels that they teach, but often that is not an available option for art teachers.

During a professional learning community meeting, should the art teacher pull a chair up to the table where colleagues are discussing 5th- and 6th-grade science curriculum, or perhaps sit in on a dialogue about plans for reinforcing positive behavior in the lower grades? Art educators can feel pulled in a million different directions as they try to meet the needs of all their students, and their role in the organizational structure for professional learning can be just as frustrating (Lind, 2007).

Last year, my school district held three in-service days specifically designed for the professional development of art educators. At each of these sessions, I met with a small group of peers with the task assigned to us by our superintendent: placing the units of study that we had developed individually into a shared curriculum map. We spent the day staring at our laptop screens and working to fit our particular lesson plans into spreadsheets. At the end of the day, our administrative task had been performed and the boxes were filled in, but instead of feeling invigorated from a day in the company of other art teachers, I felt spent and frustrated. The projects that came to life in the hands of our students, now reduced to objectives and performance outcomes, had also been drained of their color and excitement. Researchers on professional

learning communities (Clark, 2001; Snow-Gerono, 2005) have reported that individuals benefit when there are opportunities for teacher inquiry and open dialogue. On that day of scheduled and scripted professional development, the only inquiry and dialogue that occurred related to accessing the shared document and formatting text within the spreadsheet. On our lunch break, we talked about our desire to get together sometime at each other's studios to play with materials and learn new techniques. Yet at this year's district meeting, we were told by our superintendent that due to budget issues, art teachers would not be meeting at all on scheduled in-service days.

Responding to a scarcity of research about professional development specifically for art educators, Robert Sabol (2006), with the support of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), conducted an extensive study distributing a detailed questionnaire to 3,265 art educators from across the country. His purpose was to identify the factors affecting the implementation of beneficial models of continuing education for art teachers. After examining the findings, he concluded that teachers will ultimately need to be proactive in their own professional growth by advocating for, designing, and participating in activities that are meaningful to them. What do teachers want out of their professional development experiences? According to the survey, they want to "improve their teaching, help students learn better, keep informed about the field, develop skills, and challenge themselves" (p. 6). How could I facilitate meetings that would allow all those things to happen?

#### **Beginnings**

Working part-time allows me to volunteer as a docent at the contemporary art museum in my local community, and I have been impressed by the rich connections that children make between themselves and the artwork on display. By choosing to meet at the museum and to focus on the exhibits as catalysts for our unit discussion, we would be following the lead of educators such as Olivia Gude (2004) and those behind the Art21 (n.d.) initiatives, exposing ourselves to new contemporary artists whose work would "provoke curiosity and encourage dialogue about the world and the issues that affect student lives" (para, 4). The resulting conversations and hands-on responses to the art would make our discoveries more relevant to our students.

The first two teachers I approached about participating, William and Ellen, were already acquaintances; the third, Suzanne, had been a student teacher in Ellen's classroom the previous year. All of us teach elementary-aged students at schools in southern Vermont and all were enthusiastic about getting together for a collaborative project. During individual interviews after our first two meetings, I asked them why they had agreed to participate in the group.

"I thought maybe some good ideas would come out of it, and it would be nice to know what other people were doing." —William<sup>2</sup>

"Well, I've always been eager to help people who are trying to get things done, to continue their professional development. I guess I'm empathetic. That was one reason, and then also to hang out with other elementary art teacher, because I never get time to do that,"—Suzanne

These comments fueled our plan to meet as likeminded teachers by touring our local museum and then gathering at my house to discuss our impressions, brainstorm possible curricular connections, and respond to what we had seen with an open-ended, hands-on activity.

#### **Our First Meeting**

On the first day of our collaboration, I stood outside the museum, excited about the possibilities of our encounters. I handed out sketchbooks for recording ideas and outlined the plan for our next few meetings, emphasizing that our goal would be the development of a shared unit of study.

Our local museum, located in the center of town, has rotating exhibits of contemporary art. When we visited, there were six exhibits on display. We focused on Wolf Kahn's pastel landscapes and the work of two fiber artists, Salley Mayor and Karen Kamenetzky. We toured the museum, making notes, and then returned to my house for some light refreshments and conversation. Before discussing what we had seen at the museum, I invited each teacher to share something that he or she found useful or particularly successful in the classroom. William showed the group how to construct large articulated figures for the upcoming Day of the Dead observation by combining precut rectangles, a lesson he adapted from Nancy Beal's The Art of Teaching Art to Children: In School and at Home (2001). I passed out fliers (from the state art teachers'

conference) outlining plans for the Youth Art Month exhibition at the state house. Ellen pulled up a video on GourmetPaperMache. com that her students had really enjoyed.

After our sharing time, we shifted to the dining room table, each of us reaching for a particular material from the abundant array. I had chosen an assortment of media related to the work we had seen; this allowed us a chance to turn what we had viewed and discussed into something more tangible. As we continued our initial investigations using the materials, ideas for lessons connected to the exhibits began to emerge.

"Those quilted fabric pieces we saw reminded me of the cells that the kids are looking at under the microscope in science. We could do a project about biology." —Ellen

Ellen took out a book she bought at the museum that showed how artist Salley Mavor makes the characters in her sewn story panels. I ran down to the basement to bring up some silk flowers that we could use to make the clothes for little fairy figures, like Mavor does. A few minutes later, there was a cast of wild-haired characters assembled on the table. Before we knew it, our time was up, and we agreed to meet again at the museum the next month, where we would design a unit of study to teach to our students.

#### **Second Meeting at the Museum**

One month later, our cohort was back at the museum, assembled in one of the smaller exhibition rooms, viewing colorful pastel landscapes of the Vermont countryside. Each of our schools places a strong emphasis on place-based education, and Wolf Kahn's work



ABOVE and Page 14: Ready to PLAY! Available art materials related to work viewed at the museum.



Conversation area in the Wolf Kahn exhibition.

seemed like a perfect starting point for us to begin our discussion on a common unit of study. We agreed to develop a series of lessons for our 5th-grade students. While investigating the works on display, we exchanged our ideas regarding possible materials to use and themes to emphasize.

"I'm wondering about using chalk; I mean, it seems like he does these layers of color." —William

"This seems like it would be more about seeing, about simplifying."
—Ellen

"I did [a project about] Wolf Kahn two or three years ago, and we went outside and the kids really had fun with it. Everyone had their clipboards and their own baggies of pastels, and they each had a special place to be. They were really a hard group, and this was a fun project for them. It was all about the prep for them, picking out all the colors that they thought they might like."—Suzanne

After brainstorming, we decided on a unit of study that would encourage students to create landscapes inspired by Wolf Kahn's use of expressive colors and simplified forms. We would design a series of lessons addressing the same topic but tailored to our own group of students.

Shirley Hord has written extensively about professional development and, along with Victoria Boyd (1994), argues for a cooperative approach to teaching. Hord details the core concepts behind successful professional development opportunities: establishing shared leadership, emphasizing collective creativity, and promoting shared values and vision under supportive conditions (Hord, 2009). Cooperative teaching, when built around a foundation of collegiality and inquiry, strengthens the teacher's practice with a direct result of more engaging and meaningful lessons for students (Gates, 2010; Snow-Gerono, 2005). Within just two meetings, our group had developed a mutual trust and respect that allowed for thoughtful and insightful discussions, with all teachers listening and contributing equally. Our collaboration led not only to enriched peer interaction, but also to engaging classroom applications and positive student responses.

### Impact of Professional Learning in the Art Room

Working intently, Meghan<sup>3</sup>, one of my 5th-grade students, bent over her paper, blending the pastels with her fingertips. A carpet of red and yellow leaves met the blue sky of the landscape she had created. Teachers will ultimately need to be proactive in their own professional growth by advocating for, designing, and participating in activities that are meaningful to them. What do teachers want out of their professional development experiences?





Her forearm and cheek showed a history of the other colors she used to build up layers: blue, green, smudges of gold. I asked my students to write down a list of emotions and to imagine what colors and shapes might be paired with a particular feeling. We then looked at some photographs of landscapes and talked about horizontal and vertical planes, light sources, and textures. To encourage the students to make connections between the artwork and their own lives (Gude, 2004; Sandell, 2012), I asked them to close their eyes before they began sketching and to imagine themselves in the middle of a field during a specific season. What did the air feel like? Where was the sun? Were leaves rustling on the trees? The assignment was to draw from personal experience using chalk to create a landscape that evoked a particular emotion.

A week later, I visited Ellen at her school to see what her students had done. Ellen's students were illustrating stories using the same techniques that we had seen in Salley Mavor's work at the museum, including figures like the ones we had made at my house. I made a plan to interview each of the participants so I could compare the work that resulted and find out if any other aspects of our collaboration affected student

achievement or the teachers' professional practices. We scheduled our meeting during her lunch break, but there were a handful of students moving about the room, collecting materials and putting finishing touches on fabric environments. On one square of felt, a tiny Harry Potter made from fabric and beads stood in front of a massive door, pointing his wand toward a spiraling shape. On another, Rapunzel—with her long, golden braid—leaned out of a tower window.

With the classroom cleared of students, Ellen told me about the Wolf Kahn project:

It was actually helpful when I told the kids that they were doing this project in conjunction with other art teachers and that we were going to share our work. They thought that was really cool, like they'd be part of a bigger group.

The students were echoing the same feeling of empowerment that teachers express when working toward a common goal in a learner-directed, collaborative environment (Gates, 2010; Lind, 2007).

Ellen's students created a variety of scribble papers—layers and layers of intersecting lines and colors on different shades of paper. Then they went outside to lightly sketch from observation the trees and fields that surround

their school in this scenic part of the Green Mountains. The following class, they ripped up their scribble papers to form a collage with the shapes and contours that they had drawn in their landscapes. Her students' work was very different from mine, but equally impressive.

The student work in the other teachers' classrooms was also compelling. All four teachers reported that the unit they created as part of our collaboration was particularly successful. In our discussions at the museum, we used the input and support of our cohort to adapt the lessons and make them more meaningful for our classes. According to Hazelroth and Moore (1998), "effective collaborations are characterized by shared needs and interests, a commitment of time, and energetic individuals who manifest the collaborative spirit, ongoing communication and a willingness to share resources" (p. 213).

Suzanne later stated that it was helpful "knowing that one time that we were all doing the same project together." She explained, "I don't know what it did, but it gave kind of a sympathetic cushion knowing that someone else out there is going through the same things, that maybe we were all experiencing the same struggles or having the same successes." The influence of our



FROM LEFT: Student's Harry Potter illustration from Ellen's storybook assignment.

Two examples of student work from Linda's and Ellen's assignments based on the work of Wolf Kahn.

collaboration went beyond just that unit. Three out of four teachers designed lesson plans around the sewn story figures of Salley Mavor, asking students to make connections to literature by crafting narrative, embroidered pieces. Other lessons grew out of conversations and sharing that occurred when we met at my home.

#### **Conclusions**

The enthusiasm and openness of each teacher, an engaging collection of contemporary art, and the opportunity for hands-on, creative exploration all added to the success of the Sunday afternoon meetings. This is not surprising; studies and surveys have shown that art educators crave opportunities to make art (Brewer, 1999; Sabol, 2006). Most art educators are artists as well as teachers, and manipulating materials is how we think, how we express ourselves, how we connect with others. Having our conversations occur in a comfortable environment made the meetings more intimate. Researchers have stated, "teacher conversation groups constitute a low-cost, sustainable, satisfying, and potentially transformative form of teacher professional development" (Clark, 2001, p. 172). After only two meetings, through the combination of exposure to art exhibits, access

to materials for "constructive play," collegial sharing of resources, and time dedicated to collaborative planning, each teacher gained more than a handful of ideas for lessons, most of which connected to the curriculum beyond the arts. We had formed a neighborhood, borrowing books and ideas from one another. Our formal experiment lasted only 3 months, but within that short time we met all five of the criteria that teachers had asked for in the NAEA study. As Sabol (2006) recommended, we took action and initiated our own model for professional development by creating a small, informal professional learning community that fed our needs as artist and teachers, collaborating with the goal of educating ourselves so that we could better serve our students.

Linda Whelihan is an artist/educator in Brattleboro, Vermont. E-mail: l.whelihan@ comcast.net. Website: lindawhelihan.com After only two meetings... each teacher gained more than a handful of ideas for lessons, most of which connected to the curriculum beyond the arts.

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#### **ENDNOTES**

- 1 Source: www.museumofplay.org/ education/education-andplay-resources/play-quotes
- <sup>2</sup> All personal communication, observations, reflections, and interviews are from 2011 and 2012. the research for this article was conducted as part of the author's Master of Arts in Art Education degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA).
- <sup>3</sup> The student's name is a pseudonym.

#### **AUTHOR NOTES**

The research for this article was conducted as part of the author's Master of Arts in Art Education degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA).

Special thanks to the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center in Brattleboro, Vermont for exhibiting such inspirational works of art.

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#### National Core Arts Standards

The National Core Arts Standards are intended to be voluntary standards for adoption or adaption by states or districts and consist of resources in relation to five artistic disciplines: Dance, Media Arts, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts. The 2014 standards are web-based and included a series of supporting documents. www.nationalartsstandards.org

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#### **Research Commission Microsite**

The NAFA Research Commission has issued an ongoing Call for Submissions for the microsite, and is working to meet the ongoing research needs of the visual arts education field.



www.arteducators.org/research/ commission

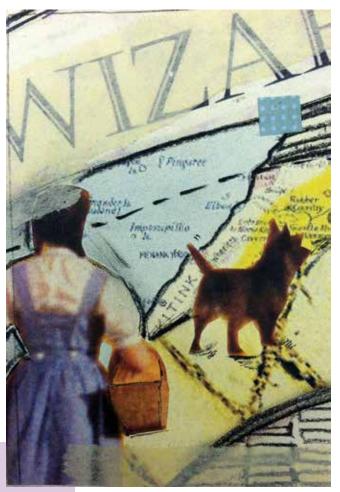
#### NAEA Research Commission Interactive Café

The Interactive Café—a home for all art educators to connect around research supports user-generated blogs, chats, image and video posts, and more. Members are invited to enter and creatively use the Café in ways that support conversations about research theory and practice in art education. Visit http:// naearesearchcommission.hoop.la/home and click "JOIN" in the top, right corner.

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Learn what teaching candidates report as their needs, and how you can benefit by serving as a mentor to teaching candidates on the "yellow brick road" to licensure.



# The Yellow Brick Mentoring Student Teachers

an't you give me brains?" asked the Scarecrow. "You don't need them. You are learning something everyday. A baby has brains, but it doesn't know much. Experience is the only thing that brings knowledge, and the longer you are on earth the more experience you are sure to get."

—L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900/2005, p. 154)

Like the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion, preservice art educators are searching for the missing intangibles—the special gifts (brains, heart, and courage) that underpin teaching excellence in the art room. Our field, and its ability to produce teaching excellence, depends upon the generosity of co-operating teachers (co-ops) who make the journey with preservice art teacher candidates as they complete their practicum experience. In this article, we (faculty and supervisory staff in a teacher licensure program) describe what our teacher candidates report needing from their co-ops during the practicum experience. In addition, we discuss how mentoring a teacher candidate might reinvigorate your own pedagogy. Most importantly, we speak directly to classroom art teachers and encourage them to participate as a co-op, as this has become a critical issue for teacher preparation programs in our area.

In thinking about our teaching philosophies, or what characteristics we believe define good teaching practice, we look back to those who taught us. Our former art education professors/mentors have different teaching styles; they originate from different backgrounds and use different approaches in their classroom strategies. One commonality surfaces among all of

our best teachers: They took personal interest in our educational journey—our yellow brick road to a career in art education and helped guide us along the way. The fact that we teach and supervise preservice art teachers today is directly related to those who mentored us. Now we stand before preservice art teachers, asking them to observe and inquire, helping them plan curriculum, and eventually assisting in the support of their practicum experience. It is critical—and required—that teacher candidates in our state invest multiple hours<sup>1</sup> in both pre-practicum and practicum settings, because while classroom instruction, textbooks, and assignments serve important functions in our student's development, we believe spending time in an art classroom with an art teacher is the most authentic learning opportunity teacher preparation programs offer. Our belief is well-supported; researchers in the field of education (Brimfield & Leonard, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1998, 2007; Dodds, 1985; Fenimore-Smith, 2004; Haring & Nelson, 1980; Lui, 2003; McDermott, 2002; Michell & Schwager, 1993; O'Sullivan, 1990; Orland-Barack, 2002; Paese, 1984; Schempp, 1985; Yost, 1997) agree that practicum experiences are "the most significant component of teacher preparation programs" (as cited in Unrath & Kerridge, 2009, p. 273).

### Road to Licensure:

### Through the Practicum Experience

#### SHARI L. SAVAGE, DENNIS CANNON, and JUSTIN P. SUTTERS

#### Following the Yellow Brick Road

As sophomores, students at our institution apply by portfolio to our teacher education program, the first step in their journey toward licensure. One item in the application portfolio is a statement of intent: an essay in which prospective students tend to write, in rather flowery prose, about their passion for art, and often times about a high school art teacher that inspired them or challenged them, or that the art room was a safe or welcoming place for them. Applicants want to be that person or to offer that special classroom experience to students. At the end of their first full year in the program, after many hours of coursework, field observations, and a few trial lesson plans, we ask them to revisit their statement of intent and to reflect on what might have changed. Their disillusionment is palpable, yet they remain hopeful that they will make a difference in their students' lives. Teacher candidate angst is usually centered on the demands placed on teachers, the innumerable plates spinning in the air, and the surprisingly serious business of public education. Like Dorothy peeking behind the curtain, the magic and mystery are revealed in ways they had not been expecting... the Wizard of Oz is human, after all.

Good teaching looks effortless. Part performance, part passion, part expertise (Stronge, 2007), great teachers embody enthusiasm for art and artmaking. What teacher candidates need to understand is how the behind-the-curtain preparation—the organization, the weekend hours spent gathering and planning, and the thoughtful reflection—lead to good practice. The co-ops—our Wizards in the field—share their best practices, their most effective strategies; they share what is certainly a sacred place (their classrooms and their treasured students); and sometimes they share their own frustrations and disappointments, all valuable learning opportunities for our candidates (McCann, Johannessen, & Ritter, 2009; Stanulis & Russell, 2000). No longer seen as infallible, the now-humanized co-op illuminates the process of becoming pedagogically sound. By taking the time (and it is a time-consuming commitment), 2 co-ops provide

teacher candidates with immeasurable authentic experiences. We invest in this commitment, too, knowing that good mentorship can provide the most purposeful educational opportunities for our candidates (Chesley & Jordan, 2012; Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2010). Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, and Wycoff (2009) found that prep programs taught by tenure-track faculty that culminate in co-op mentored student teaching practicums are the best indicator of strong novice performance in the classroom (p. 434). Our alumni agree; data show that they highly valued their practicum experiences and the quality of mentoring they received from co-operating teachers (Educator Preparation Exit Survey, 2014).

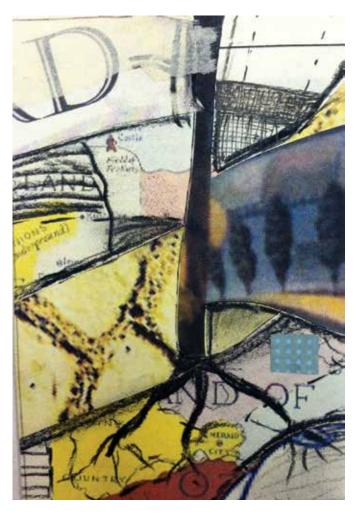
Multiple factors are considered when planning placement fits for each of our teacher candidates, including faculty input, personal interviews, and individual candidate needs. But as each placement period draws near, fewer teachers are available to serve, and while this shift in our field is disturbing, it is not unexpected. The current economy certainly affects the number of available qualified art teachers.<sup>3</sup> Failed levies (both suburban and urban failed levies in our area have reduced art teaching positions), teachers splitting time between schools, or art on a cart make the traditional practicum experience harder to replicate.

We have had to adapt how we place teacher candidates, cajole overworked teachers into serving as co-ops, create digital reporting systems that simplify required paperwork, and rethink what our teacher candidates can reasonably expect to gain from their practicum placement. A more recent challenge in finding willing co-ops relates to electronic portfolio-based edTPA (Teacher Performance Assessment)—teacher candidate assessments now being implemented in our state—and similar portfolio-based assessments for practicing art teachers. Several of our seasoned co-ops have stopped mentoring as they prepare for their own assessments, leaving us with even fewer practicum sites available for assigning candidates. Underneath all the regrouping, redesigning, and now reassigning, is the understanding that the practicum experience is significantly changed.

Our best teachers... took personal interest in our educational journey—our yellow brick road to a career in art education—and helped guide us along the way.

The yellow brick road to licensure is different now, but more than ever our field must foster the essential practicum experience despite the obstacles present today. If you already welcome teacher candidates into your classroom, we thank you for your selfless dedication to future art educators. To those who have resisted mentoring a student teacher or who have stopped mentoring, we hope you will reconsider for the strength and well-being of our field. What follows are results culled from our teacher candidates on what they need from co-ops during the practicum experience—a list of questions and areas of guidance we hope you will find helpful as you mentor. Equally important, we address what you might gain from mentoring a candidate.

Teacher candidates (50 candidates in 2007 and 44 candidates in 2012) were surveyed<sup>4</sup> about their pre-practicum and practicum experiences and asked an open-ended question<sup>5</sup> on what specific information they needed from their co-op about teaching practice. The most common responses were transcribed and are listed below. Using the major content section headings from the *Domains of Professional Practice* (ETS Praxis), candidates in both surveys offered feedback reporting the following needs:



#### 1. Organizing Content Knowledge for Student Learning

- Help me understand where you are in your curriculum.
- Share lesson plans that were successful and tell me why.
- Explain how you plan and how much time I need to devote to planning.
- · Share strategies for improving time management.
- Give me constructive feedback on my lessons.

#### 2. Creating an Environment for Student Learning

- · Share your teaching philosophy.
- Explain how and why your classroom is set up the way it is
- What are the specific rules and management strategies you subscribe to in your classroom?
- Show me how you handle behavior issues and share any school-wide procedures I should know about.
- How do you motivate students who don't seem to care?
- Help me understand how you earn respect from your students.
- What specifics do I need to understand about cultural diversity in your classroom?

#### 3. Teaching for Student Learning

- Please be direct with me on what you expect me to do or accomplish.
- What have your students already done or experienced?
- How do you balance positive feedback with challenging students to do more?
- Can you help me understand student IEPs and how you differentiate your curriculum?
- What do your students enjoy? I'd like to relate better to them.
- · What are your assessment strategies and why?
- · How do you deal with language differences?

#### 4. Professional Responsibilities

- Help me get to know the school and the players.
- · Does your school have a procedures handbook?
- How do school politics affect you and your discipline?
- Be honest about school issues—I need to understand the social climate.
- How do you get funding? Tell me about your budget.
- · How do you deal with parents and/or guardians?
- What other duties do you perform at/for your school?

This list is shared with our co-op cadre at an orientation session that precedes the student-teaching practicum. While these are among the most-mentioned questions and needs reported by teacher candidates, there are some questions they are not sure how to ask. The practicum, for all the best-case (and worst-case) scenarios it can offer, is still influenced by the very idea of being a guest in a co-op's classroom. Despite that, teacher candidates are genuinely interested in having a truly purposeful practicum experience and, for many of them, the actual relationship with their co-op is critical—an alchemy of factors that can make or break the practicum experience.

Stanulis and Russell (2000) state, "research on mentoring indicates that classroom teachers have a significant impact on the learning of novices and in shaping novices' beliefs and practices" (p. 66). A mentoring relationship is not, however, about being overly supportive, nor is it a place for modeling the "right way" as being based on how you teach. Hale (2000) argues that mentoring should not reproduce a likeminded teacher; rather, a co-op should challenge and support the teacher candidate as an individual developing his or her own pedagogical beliefs and teaching style (cited in Rajuan et al., 2010, p. 204). Just as the yellow brick road presented Dorothy and her traveling companions with surprising obstacles, teacher candidates benefit from reflective advice on how to deal with difficulties (winged monkeys aside) in the classroom, while still allowing them to seek their own solutions.

#### The Journey to Oz

As a mentor teacher, you can set your own agenda when it comes to sharing your classroom and expertise. Consider and discuss your needs with your area's placement coordinator, if possible, and describe the kind of student teacher you believe will best suit your teaching personality and classroom situation. For example, if you teach from a cart and have limited time, request a self-directed teacher candidate—one who can hold his or her own without constant supervision and/or feedback. Or you can request a candidate who needs more development and encouragement, especially if can recall your own trepidation as a new student teacher. Few things are as rewarding as watching a novice find his or her footing and blossom in the classroom.

The university supervisor has unique and difficult roles to balance: those of observer, mediator, and cheerleader. Like Glinda the Good Witch, supervisors drop in along the yellow brick road to licensure in order to offer assistance to both the mentor co-op and the candidate. One helpful suggestion from our university supervisor staff is that co-ops should explain to their student teacher how they would like the mentoring relationship to operate. For example, do you want students to reflect on their teaching first, or to discuss their thoughts and impressions and then get your feedback? If so, when and how will this take place? Describe to your student teacher what your mentoring style is. Do you prefer to walk the yellow brick road as colleagues and let Glinda float in (minus the incandescent bubble) and offer constructive feedback? Or will you tell it like it is as the day unfolds... saving kinder, gentler feedback for later, when class time is not at a premium? These are important expectations to work through and will, in the end, keep the air clear for honest, purposeful reflection and feedback (McCann et al., 2009; Rajuan et al., 2010). Reflective opportunities abound during practicum experiences, leading to improved teaching practices and better student outcomes for both the mentor and the mentee (Etschiedt, Curran, & Sawyer, 2012). Framing



critical feedback as reflective practice helps teacher candidates understand that pedagogy is never fixed; rather, it is routinely questioned and reconsidered.

The practicum is a long-standing tradition in preservice teacher candidate training. More than any other measure, it allows theory and practice to integrate with one another through comprehensive engagements in classroom teaching during a sustained and observable period. Growth is inevitable, teaching skills are challenged and honed, and former coursework transforms into real-life applications, all thanks to the guiding presence of seasoned co-ops.

It is a long journey, through a country that is sometimes pleasant and sometimes dark and terrible. However, I will use all the magic arts I know of to keep you from harm.

—Baum (1900/2005, p. 26)

Like Glinda the Good Witch, supervisors drop in along the yellow brick road to licensure in order to offer assistance to both the mentor co-op and the candidate.

## We should endeavor to balance our frustrations with administrative and policy issues with the greater purpose of professional development for our field.

#### The Emerald City

We made the claim that a successful practicum experience better prepares future art educators, and therefore, betters our field. But other than good will, what's in it for you? If you are open to traveling the yellow brick road with a preservice teacher candidate, the experience can be meaningful for you, too. Preservice teachers arrive in your classroom nervous, excited, passionate, and full of ideas they want to give wings to. Being around unbridled, somewhat-naive passion can be uplifting. It reminds us what it feels like to be fueled by possibilities, much like the magical promise of the Emerald City, rather than classroom realities. And although teacher candidates also bring ambitious lesson plans, they do have a good understanding of topics that are relevant today, which can invigorate your practice. One co-op described how she voiced concern to a candidate that her young students would not be able to do the lesson as planned. She decided to allow the candidate to try to learn from the poor outcome. Instead, the co-op learned that her students not only enjoyed the challenging lesson, but that they also did quite well with the process. When failure does occur (and it invariably will), preservice candidates can become deflated—but a good mentor knows how to offer support, helpful advice, and perhaps a humorous example from his or her student teaching experience (Rajuan et al., 2010). Reflecting on a lesson gone badly is good pedagogy, and both mentor and mentee can take comfort in working through successful strategies.

Opening your classroom to a novice teacher is generous, but it is also reciprocal. Davies, Brady, Rodger, and Wall (1999) noted that important benefits related to mentoring teacher candidates include increased professionalism, improved teaching skills, better reflective qualities, and reduced feelings of isolation (cited in Grisham, Brink, & Ferguson, 2004, p. 308). Ritter, recalling her first experience as a co-op, learned as much about her own teaching practice as she believes she imparted on her student teacher, an outcome she found surprising (McCann et al., 2009, p. 117). Gumble (2011) agrees, reflecting on her experience as a co-op:

I realize now that student teachers can add an important dimension to the atmosphere and pace of my classes, energizing both me and my students with new ideas and a fresh passion for teaching. As a result, I have grown to appreciate my role as a mentor teacher as much as I cherish my role as a classroom instructor. (p. 85)

Dorothy's travels to the Emerald City were better navigated as a team. Likewise, the mentoring process heightens and refreshes our own pedagogy. Allowing teacher candidates an authentic classroom experience is purposeful and enlightening—honesty being an important aspect in that experience. In art education, it is especially meaningful to share what drives passion in practice, which helps candidates remain connected to the things that first brought them to our discipline (Milbrandt, 2002, as cited in Klein, 2008, p. 377).

After Dorothy completed her tasks and returned to the Emerald City, not all was as promised. As educators, we know more obstacles are to come for these novices; however, we should endeavor to balance our frustrations with administrative and policy issues with the greater purpose of professional development for our field. The Emerald City, at first an illuminated utopia at the journey's end, is still a worthy destination and goal, despite its fallibility. Allow the Emerald City to shine a bit longer for those nearing the end of the yellow brick road to licensure. Let's focus instead on helping future art educators realize they possessed the gifts they needed for the journey all along—brains, heart, and courage—so that they, too, will find "home" in the art classroom.

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#### **AUTHOR NOTE**

Mixed-media images created for this article by Shari Savage.

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#### **ENDNOTES**

- Candidates complete statemandated 100 pre-practicum hours and a semester-long (14-week) practicum. A 12-week practicum is the state minimum.
- <sup>2</sup> Co-ops do not receive funding in our state for acting as a mentor teacher.
- 3 Co-operating or mentoring art teachers must have 3 years of consecutive experience in order to host a teacher candidate.
- 4 2012 respondents (pre-practicum and practicum students) were more interested in classroom management strategies and behavior issues than 2007 respondents were.
- 5 Survey question asked students to respond in each domain category; for example: "What do you need from your co-op?" was listed above the section labeled "Organizing Content Knowledge for Student Learning."



Article from the November 2014 issue of SchoolArts magazine.

## Thinking Inside the Box



Sharon Vatsky

s the conversation in the field of education turns more and more to creativity, teachers are imploring their students to "think outside the box." Recent studies, however, suggest that this plea may actually yield the opposite result.

What is this "box" that we should be getting out of? According to neurologist Kenneth Heilman, author of *Creativity and the Brain* (Psychology Press, 2005), creativity involves coming up with something new, as well as shutting down the brain's habitual response and letting go of conventional solutions.

#### **Looking Around Inside the Box**

When trying to solve a problem, most of us begin with familiar solutions. However, if the answer doesn't come, our brains begin searching for alternatives. We search for connections in both familiar and more distant areas, pulling thoughts together into

a single new idea that enters consciousness. This is the "aha" moment of insight. Now the brain must evaluate the idea

it has just generated. Creativity requires this constant shifting between both convergent and divergent thinking—of looking around both "inside the box" and venturing out of it.

#### **Synthesis In History**

In her book, *Creativity from Constraints* (Springer Publishing, 2006), Patricia D. Stokes argues that being completely free and without constraints actu-

ally hinders problem solving and creativity. History is filled with examples of breakthroughs that are not the result of abandoning the box, but rather finding a unique synthesis of "in the box" and "out of the box" thinking. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque worked together for eight years to find the new way of representing the world that came to be known as Cubism. Claude Monet limited his subject matter in order to focus on changing light and atmospheric effects, and Piet Mondrian continued to reduce his options until his work contained only the most distilled elements.

#### The Box as Fertile Ground

Creativity involves coming

up with something new,

as well as letting go of

conventional solutions.

Although the "box" can imply constraint, other boxes are considered fertile areas for ideas and exploration. The "black box theater" is nearly synonymous with experimentation and suggests a space that is flexible, versatile, and easy to change. Galleries

are sometimes referred to as "white boxes"—clean, open spaces that are perfect for exhibiting all kinds of art.

And, of course, there are those "toolboxes" that educators fill with useful teaching strategies and methodologies. All boxes are clearly not created equal.

In her book, The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life: A Practical Guide (Simon and Schuster, 2003), acclaimed choreographer Twyla Tharp describes her way of utilizing "the box." She begins every new dance with a literal cardboard

box. She writes the name of the project on the outside of the box and proceeds to fill it up with every item that went into creating that work, including clippings, videos, notes, and photos. She states:

... a box is like soil to me. It's basic, earthy, elemental. It's home. It's what I can always go back to when I need to regroup and keep my bearings. Knowing that the box is always there gives me the freedom to venture out, be bold, dare to fall flat on my face. Before you can think out of the box, you have to start with a box.

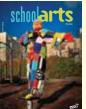
#### **Inspiring Your Students**

So what can you say to students to encourage them to experiment, be flexible, and seek unique solutions? According to Mark Runco, professor of education at the University of Georgia, the best tactic is to ask students to: "Do something that only you would come up with—that none of your friends or family would think of." When this advice is given, the number of creative responses doubles.

For me, the box is like an artist's studio, a scientist's laboratory, or a woodworker's shop. It holds all the useful things you have learned to assist in finding multiple solutions to your next big question. Sometimes you will need to go outside your box and bring back something new. You might want to visit some other boxes, like schools, museums, libraries, or hardware stores, or meet with those who have constructed boxes that are different from yours. As you grow, your box becomes more personal and reflective of your interests. You need not abandon the box. The box can be your friend.

Sharon Vatsky is the director of school and family programs at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.









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Explore the benefits of implementing a Peer Mentor Program in a teacher licensure program, such as creating a network for lone art teachers and improving students' lesson plan writing skills.

## Building a Teaching Community Through Peer Mentoring

#### KARIN TOLLEFSON-HALL

his article shares the benefits and challenges of implementing a Peer Mentor Program in a university art and teacher licensure program. It is undeniable that many art teachers in the United States are the only visual arts instructor in their school building. Or, in my case, when I got my first teaching job in a rural Midwestern community, I was the only art teacher in the entire school district. The closest art teacher to me was 13 miles away. For 3 years, I taught in the rural community where my only opportunity to connect with other art teachers within a 50-mile radius were 3 professional development days in March.

There were four art teachers, including myself, that were part of a consortium of schools collaborating for professional development. Gratefully, during these 3 days the art teachers were allowed to meet as a group and to take turns leading our own development sessions. I cherished being able to have a conversation about art learning and instruction. The rest of the school year I spent teaching alone at the end of the hallway across from the gym, the only art teacher for 13 miles.

Art teachers often find themselves isolated within their school building, unlike grade level teachers in elementary schools or core subject area teachers in secondary schools. Finding a community of support takes time and effort. It may mean reaching out to friends or advisors from college who are not in the same district, county, or state. As student teachers finish teaching and look for jobs, many are spread far and wide from the mentors and educators they have come to trust. It is hoped that the Peer Mentor Program will provide opportunities to build lasting relationships during college that have the potential to carry over into a teaching career.

The primary goal of the Peer Mentor Program is to establish a social network among art education students at varying levels of the methods coursework that will generate friendships which carry over into our students' teaching lives. The secondary goal of the program is to improve students' lesson plan writing skills. The combination of these two goals provides benefits that are both immediate and long lasting for students.

#### **Defining Peer Mentoring**

The literature on mentoring is vast; for the purposes of this article, I have limited it to mentoring in educational settings. The classical concept of a mentor refers to a wise elder who provides guidance to a younger person (Barrett, 2000; Falchikov, 2001; Le Cornu, 2005; Rautkorpi, 2007). This traditional mentor structure places the mentor in a position of power above the mentee, as the person holding the knowledge desired. In the context of this program, the students and mentors are close in age and educational background and therefore are referred to as *peer mentors*. The peer mentors work together in a mutual relationship rather than a top-down power structure. Educational research has numerous terms for people of similar age and/or experiences working together in mentoring relationships. Besides peer mentoring (Kim & Shaw, 2009; Le Cornu, 2005; Terrion & Leonard, 2007; Westerlund, Granucci, Gamache, & Clark, 2006), other terms include co-mentoring (Jipson & Paley, 2000; Mullen, 2000), collaborative mentoring (Mullen, 2000), mutual tutoring (Gartner, 1998), peer tutoring (Falchikov, 2001; Topping, 1996), peer-assisted learning (Topping & Ehly, 1998), collaborative learning (Goodsell, Maher & Tinto, 1992; Smith, 2008), and learning communities (Goodsell, Maher, & Tinto, 1992; Le Cornu, 2005).

The field of higher education contains examples of peer mentoring with varied purposes. Most commonly, peer mentoring is associated with the goal of increasing academic

success (Falchikov, 2001; Smith, 2008; Terrion & Leonard, 2007; Topping, 1996). Peer mentors are also valued in higher education as social support for first-year students during the transition to college (Falchikov, 2001; Harmon, 2006; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh, & Wilss, 2008; Terrion & Leonard, 2007). In general educational settings, peer mentors have been used for remediation with students (Westerlund et al., 2006) and in public school art classes to foster a relationship between elementary school children and high school students through mutual artmaking (Kelehear & Heid, 2002). In the field of art education, at the higher education level, examples of mentoring or peer mentoring are limited and focus on studio practices (Barrett, 2000) or traditional mentor relationships (Rautkorpi, 2007). Lastly, I include an example of a teacher education program in Australia that uses peer mentoring to introduce the practice of learning communities to student teachers in order to prepare them for teacher professional development programs based on teachers working collaboratively (Le Cornu,

Like most peer mentoring systems, the desired outcomes of the Peer Mentor Program are both academic and psychosocial. From the academic viewpoint, peer mentor groups work on creating and editing lesson plans. University faculty hope to improve the lesson plan writing skills of beginning art education students and of mentors through collaboration. In the psychosocial realm, the hope is for students to make personal connections with peers that are one or two semesters farther along in the program. Having personal relationships with others at different stages of beginning professional careers has the potential to create a network of teachers in different school settings to contact for support once they are the lone art teacher in their building.

## Theoretical Foundations of Mentoring

Academic and psychosocial outcomes of peer mentoring can be based in three main theories of education: Piaget's Equilibration, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, and Noddings' Ethic of Care (Falchikov, 2001; Kelehear & Heid, 2002; Topping & Ehly, 1998). In brief, Piaget indicated that learning occurs when a person is confronted with a situation that challenges his or her existing conceptual framework. Once challenged, the individual

either refuses to accept the differences in the conceptual framework or tries to make sense of the new situation. Piaget labels the process of reconciling conceptual frameworks equilibration.

Extending the process of challenging existing knowledge, Vygotsky proposed the Zone of Proximal Development, or the need to be pushed outside of existing conceptual frameworks in order to learn. When we are confronted with a problem that is one step ahead of our knowledge or skills, we can learn to solve the problem. When we encounter situations that are farther from our knowledge base, it is difficult to reach the new level alone. This is when teachers, tutors, or mentors can provide scaffolding to help bridge the gap between what we know and what we are trying to learn (Falchikov, 2001; Kelehear & Heid, 2002; Topping & Ehly, 1998).

Finally, the psychosocial goal of peer mentoring can be correlated with Nel Noddings' Ethic of Care and the role of the teacher and student in caring for each other in the learning environment. Mentors, who build trusting relationships with their mentees, care for their partner, and support them socially and emotionally as they work together (Kelehear & Heid, 2002). In both academic and social roles, the mentees are as important in providing learning opportunities and social support to the mentor as the mentor is in providing advice to the mentee. Mentees raise questions initiating reflection and discussion about teaching and the field of art education with their mentors. Mentee lesson plans provide valuable tools for mentors to learn more deeply how to write high-quality, comprehensive art lessons through critiquing someone else's. Mentors share experiences teaching in practicum and expectations for student teaching that they

have endured and that the mentee is looking forward to. In this way, the mentor and mentee have more of a mutual relationship and less of the top-down power structure that is present in traditional mentoring relationships.

#### **Program Details**

While not defined as strict cohort groups, art education students at our university typically progress through the three art education methods courses and student teaching with the same group of peers. Because of the selfcreated cohorts, students often do not know one-half to two-thirds of the other art education students in the program. There is an average of 90 students enrolled in the licensure program at any time, with 10-15 student teachers each semester. The three art education methods courses in the program include elementary methods, secondary methods, and a capstone course. The capstone course is followed by student teaching. Each course requires a corresponding practicum of 30 hours spent in school and in community art settings. Frequently, the students enrolled in the capstone art education course do not know the students who are out student teaching, as they are anxiously looking forward to student teaching themselves. At the same time, the student teachers typically do not know the group of student teachers that preceded them and who are beginning their professional careers. By establishing a friendship during the methods courses with someone who will be entering the teaching profession 6 months or 1 year before themselves, students could then have a person to contact for support when they have questions and concerns about their own teaching experiences. To begin to address the need for more supportive relationships for art teachers in

## By establishing a friendship during

**the methods courses** with someone who will be entering the teaching profession 6 months or 1 year before themselves, students could then have a person to contact for support when they have questions and concerns about their own teaching experiences.

our state, the Peer Mentor Program was established in 2010. The goal of the Peer Mentor Program is twofold: (1) to increase students' lesson plan writing skills and (2) to encourage social connections between art education students at different levels of coursework.

Three faculty members collaborate to maintain the Peer Mentor Program. The program is overseen by the instructor of secondary methods and is run in collaboration with the instructors of elementary methods and the capstone course. While personal connections are the desired outcome of the program and face-to-face meetings are preferred, it is necessary for students to have the ability to contact each other and share lesson plans electronically. Because students are in three different courses, a course website on Blackboard—the university-provided learning platform—does not allow access to all students. Instead, a Blackboard Organization is used as a central point of communication and digital file transfer for the students enrolled in the three different methods courses.

The basis of the program is to establish capstone students as mentors to partners from the elementary and secondary methods courses. The capstone students are in their final semester of art education coursework before student teaching and have already taken the secondary and elementary methods courses. As mentors, the capstone students receive course credit to meet with their partners to edit and collaborate on lesson plans for a minimum of 6 hours during the semester. To track time spent with partners, mentors document meetings in a log and provide evidence of their editing to their instructor. Evidence of editing can include hard copies of edited drafts or digital submission of documents showing editing

At the beginning of the semester, the mentor program is presented to the capstone class, and students' class schedules are collected to assist in pairing them with mentees. Mentor training is not required, because capstone students have already had the elementary and secondary methods courses, they are familiar with the lesson plan requirements, and they have had 60 hours of practicum experience teaching others in school and community settings. Since they are not trained in mentoring, the overseeing faculty member performs frequent checks on mentors and mentees during the semester in classes as well as through e-mail. Mentor

students are provided assistance and support if needed in working with their partners.

Depending on class sizes, each mentor will have one or two partners. Students in all three art education courses are expected to participate in the mentor program. To encourage participation, meeting with mentor partners is connected to lesson plan grades in all courses, with Peer Mentor Program participation equaling less than 10% of the total lesson plan grades for the semester. Once partnerships have been established, a social gathering is organized so that partners can be introduced to each other before they begin collaborating over the first lesson plan.

After the students are introduced, they begin working together on their own. Mentees are required to submit lesson plans to their mentors for review before they are turned in to faculty for grading. At our university, lesson plans are works in progress, and learning to write quality comprehensive art lessons is a developing skill. Lesson plans are not used punitively or as a test. Lesson plans can be revised and resubmitted for improved grades. Mentors and mentees often work together on revisions, as well as first drafts of lessons.

#### **Lessons Learned**

From the first trial of the Peer Mentor Program, it was found that student partners who had a common course outside of art education were most likely to be able to meet and have frequent face-to-face mentoring interactions. As a result, mentors are matched with partners with whom they share courses or with whom have similar overall class schedules to facilitate locating common periods of free time to meet.

A second lesson we learned from Peer Mentor Program was that mentors do not want to read a lesson plan and edit when they are meeting face-to-face with their partner. To solve this issue, we instituted a requirement of submitting lesson plans to the mentor 3 days before it is due to faculty. This allows mentors time to read carefully and to provide thoughtful edits before meeting in person to talk about the lesson with their partner. Because the mentors are required to edit lessons for only 6 hours to earn credit for mentoring, they do not edit every lesson written by their partners. As mentees become more confident in their lesson-planning skills, their reliance on the mentor for editing reduces.

### Benefits and Challenges of the Peer Mentor Program

Students indicated in responses to the Peer Mentor Program that the greatest challenge they face is time; they have difficulty scheduling time to meet with partners between class and work. A solution to this challenge has been to pair students who are in common classes so that they at least see each other in class and do not have to rely solely on e-mail to initiate contact. Secondly, mentees do not like being required to complete lesson plans before the faculty due dates, so that they can be reviewed by the mentor. While faculty members see this as beneficial to practicing organizational skills and time management, students complain about not being able to procrastinate.

The greatest challenge to the Peer

Mentor Program for faculty is participation. Since 2010, we have tried several variations of organizing the program to make it most productive for students and not so overbearing that they resent having to be involved. When the program was voluntary, few students participated and there was a limited benefit. When all students are required to participate (by having participation connected to grades), some students choose to forfeit their grade and not participate. The faculty members agree that the mentor experience is beneficial to all art licensure students. Considering the regular coursework demands that all three of us have, we feel that making the Peer Mentor Program so strictly mandated that a student is not allowed to pass without full participation would be detrimental to the morale of the students and program. For students to have a positive experience as a mentor or mentee, they cannot feel so pressured that they resent the task and cannot separate their anxiety to perform well from building a friendship with another student. All students need to see the program as valuable

All mentees have reported in surveys since 2010 that they benefitted from the edited lesson plans. Many appreciate the program for introducing a friendship, as well. Mentee responses include comments such as "The feedback was very detailed and helpful"; "It was great to have the perspective of people who had already been through the program"; and "[My mentor] provided some of the best advice" (student personal communications, 2012).

and to participate because they know they will

gain from it, not because they fear they will

not pass the course.

Responses from mentors after their experience editing lessons are overwhelmingly positive. The most positive shift we have seen in student attitudes toward peer mentoring is when they change from being a mentee to a mentor. Reflections by mentors are more detailed in listing gains and concerns about the Peer Mentor Program than mentee responses. Mentors describe the process of editing someone else's lesson plans: "It helped me to become more critical with my own lesson plans" and "...feeling accomplished, like I knew what I was doing as a mentor" (student personal communication, 2012). Mentors frequently comment about the social gain of the program, with comments such as: "It made me feel more connected to the art education community" (student personal communication, 2011). It has been most interesting for me to hear from students who were satisfied but unenthusiastic about the program when they were a mentee, and who become advocates for the program once they were the mentor.

#### **Implications**

The benefits to implementing a Peer Mentor Program have outweighed the challenges. Student survey responses about the Peer Mentor Program during each semester and at the conclusion of the program reveal that mentors and partners work together on more than just lesson plans. The social goal of the mentor program is evidenced in the friendships that are recorded in their responses. Students are always asked whether they worked with their mentor on anything besides lesson plans. Responses have demonstrated that mentors have shared their teaching portfolios with mentees, as well as talked about what to expect in practicum situations. One mentor volunteered to assist her partner in teaching a lesson in the community. Some mentors and partners made a habit of attending NAEA Student Chapter meetings together. One student has volunteered to continue mentoring after completing the capstone course. Overall, most mentees report a positive relationship with their mentors and a desire to continue contact.

Student progress on lesson plans in both elementary and secondary methods courses has increased as a result of peer editing, leading students to feel more satisfied with their methods courses and to spend less time revising lesson plans. Mentors hone their lesson plan skills by having to read their partners' lessons critically and to provide feedback. Writing objectives and assessments, as well as overall lesson plan flow and

consistency, have improved in beginning lesson plan writers with the help of mentor editing.

By tracking alumni through interviews and surveys, we are in the process of documenting if our program has an effect on teachers in the professional field. While peer mentoring is not new to higher education, examples of peer mentoring in art education programs are limited. The program described here addresses the needs of art education students, but the goals of improving student academic and psychosocial school experiences through working with peers in a mentor relationship could be applied to students in K-12 settings. The Peer Mentor Program provides an example of how peer mentoring can be implemented to enrich experiences of preservice art teachers.

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Two art teachers share their experiences in using a mentor program to become National Board Certified Teachers and give advice for others seeking Certification or mentorship.

# Two Women, One Shared Experience: A Mentorship Story

#### SARAH CRESS-ACKERMANN and JELENA TODOROVICH

arah Cress-Ackermann: It was my fourth year of teaching high school photography in the Chicago suburb of Streamwood, Illinois. While passionate about my position and equally in love with my students, I had developed an itch for my next challenge. I began searching for professional development opportunities online, looking at graduate programs, and perusing state and national websites for direction. Finally, I had found my answer while flipping through an old journal dating back to my student teaching days. I fell upon a few notes inspired by Susan Gleason, a lifetime mentor and friend. "Sarah, as soon as you are allowed, you must pursue this honor. It is the highest certification you can earn as an educator." I recalled my conversation with Susan as clearly as if it were yesterday. Some within my peer group at that time called my itch insanity. I know what you are thinking: No, it couldn't be... Yes, I had caught the National Board Fever.

#### What is National Board Certification?

Soon after I had contracted the Board Fever, I quickly learned that to become a National Board Certified Teacher was no easy feat. Such a pursuit involves rigorous writing that remains reflective in scope. Candidates complete a series of four portfolios, which require significant and focused written elements. One is classroom-based and features examples of student work. Two require videos, which highlight interactions between the candidate and students. The final entry documents the candidate's accomplishments and provides evidence of how continued professional growth enhances student learning. Candidates "prepare the portfolio at their own pace, usually over the course of several months" (Rotberg, Futrell, & Holmes, 2000, p. 380). The process concludes with a formal exam experience comprised of six written prompts. Candidates are assessed on their portfolio entries, in addition to their assessment center responses, "to determine whether they are qualified for National Board certification" (Rotberg et al., 2000, p. 380).

The mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is to cultivate strong accomplished professionals that "elevate the status" of the profession (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2013, para. 2). Expectations for the program include:

- raising public awareness with respect to the cognitive complexity, collaborative, and expertise-driven nature of teachers' work;
- setting higher standards for entry, advancement, and leadership in the profession; and
- recognizing accomplished teaching through a rigorous professional certification process comparable to those found in other professions such as medicine, engineering, and law. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2013, para. 2)

Those who achieve National Board Certification (NBC) boast "the highest recognition of accomplished teaching" (Barone, 2002, p. vii).



#### The Importance of Mentorship and Support

During my own pursuit of NBC, I regularly leaned on others for support. These individuals included cohort leaders, past candidates who achieved, and a small group of peers sharing in the same journey. During this time, I placed tremendous value on others' experiences with the National Board, particularly those who were certified in art. They were my inspiration. They were my mentors.

"Research has pointed out that teachers lack a professional tradition of sharing expertise and are often reluctant to articulate professional knowledge because of a culture of isolation" (Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham, & Oppong, 2007, p. 381). In a qualitative study involving 14 candidates, Park et al. (2007) present "evidence that the NBC process counteracted a culture of isolation" and that "engagement with NBC aided the development of a professional discourse community in which one another's expertise and professionalism were shared and learned" (p. 382). My pursuit of National Board supports this claim. When sought, I found my mentors and peers to be extremely supportive and willing to aid in my venture. Such support did not stop after the certification process. I continue to maintain ties with former mentors and candidates and facilitate my own professional learning community. This is evidence of one of the core propositions of NBC, which supports that accomplished teachers are a part of and interact with a variety of learning communities (Hopkins, 2004). Such involvement impacts student learning significantly, as it strengthens professionals through regular collaboration and reflection.

The certification process at large can serve "as a means for teachers to express their willingness to support each other's professional development" (Park et al. 2007, p. 382). "Teachers learn more from each other than from an authorized person such as a content expert or an education specialist" and so, "systematic efforts are necessary to facilitate collegial

interaction among teachers beyond those constraints" (pp. 382-383). Park et al. and others in the field seem to agree that teacher-to-teacher mentorship is a key factor when considering candidates' success rates and overall satisfaction with the certification process.

The reality, however, is that not every candidate accesses external supports or seeks guidance. Some teachers attempt to navigate the certification process on their own. This article was written in hopes of encouraging mentorship between candidates and those who have achieved. Such support enhances the certification experience for mentees, validates the current practices of mentors, and creates lasting bonds among similarly motivated professionals, all while increasing the potential of passing boards. Mentorship and guidance can present itself in various forms during National Board pursuit. Some teachers look to cohort groups; others look to individual colleagues. Regardless of the support sought, mentors must be there to help answer questions; critique reflective writings, videos, and documentation; lend emotional support; and celebrate milestones (Barone, 2002).

After achieving certification myself in 2010 with the support of colleagues, I knew I had to give back to my professional community. My mentors provided regular guidance, feedback, and moral support, which pushed me professionally and personally. They had given so much for so little in return. Now it was my responsibility to take on such a role. In the following pages, I share my story of pursuit alongside my mentee (and now colleague), Jelena Todorovich. I knew that as both of us were art educators, and both were motivated to enhance student learning in powerful ways, we could learn much from one another. Following, we share our separate and united tales, which illustrate one particular instance of collegial interaction and mentorship.

#### Sarah's Tale

Following my decision to strive for certification, I found myself caught up in a whirlwind of writing, rewriting, documenting, videotaping, and catching up on my art history. I attended monthly meetings that sometimes felt more like a self-help group than a National Board support cohort. As the only art educator of the group, I sometimes struggled to find common ground with my other feverish compadres. I found continued strength in one of my two support team leaders, Ruth, who was certified in Early and Middle Childhood Art. Hers was the constant voice in my head during those early-morning writing sessions and late nights in which I would lock myself in our school office, glued to my laptop. While I sadly watched others in our group fade away from the rat race, Ruth was my cheerleader, reminding me of the purpose of it all. This purpose was to challenge myself as an educator and to produce a better version of myself for my kids. For me, it was always about the kids.

After putting together four comprehensive portfolios, surviving the all-mighty testing center, and packaging everything up into that devilish blue box, I left the rest up to the NBC gods. For a few weeks, I could not stop thinking about the ordeal, waiting impatiently for the results. After a few months and the continuation of life, I thought about it less and less, until it eventually faded into my distant memory as something I once did. Eventually, I felt my next itch, this time leading me to the University of Missouri, St. Louis, where I enrolled in a doctoral program.

It was a typical day at the university, and I had just finished teaching a section of a course called Theory to Practice. Art education students lingered in the classroom to ask a few follow-up questions. As I provided clarification on a reflective assignment, I was interrupted midsentence. I remembered what day it was: It was Results Day [insert dramatic pause here]. As soon as I got the chance, I rushed home to my laptop, desiring the privacy to cry if needed. As if my life depended on it, I was logging into the National Board website to see what hand the gods had dealt. I had passed. Wait, what, I had passed!? In disbelief, I read the words over and over again, hoping they would set in. I even made my fiancé read them out loud. Through happy tears, I said to myself, "Wow, I did it!" For the next several months I remained on cloud nine. I had passed!

After a year of so of giddiness, I felt the need to give back to the National Board community. Thinking fondly of my relationship with Ruth and countless other art educators who took the time to read my entries over and over again, I placed my name on an official listserv of enthusiastic mentors. It was through such a listserv that I came to know Jelena Todorovich. While we still have yet to meet in person, we have connected in so many ways electronically. Following is her story of National Board pursuit.

#### Jelena's Tale

I was in my 12th year of teaching and had a fantastic tenured position in which I was privileged to watch my students grow from 1st through 8th grade. I had earned my Master's in Education as well as an English language learner certification a few years previously. I was looking for a challenge and a means to further my awareness of my teaching practice. I had been thinking about this for years, and knew this was the next step I had to take.

The timing could not have worked out better, as there were three other teachers in my building that would be attempting this feat alongside me. We joined a district cohort that met twice a month and offered additional support to one another along the way. It was during one of our cohort meetings that I realized that I needed advice from someone who knew art. Classroom teachers could all lean on one another, but when it came to content-specific questions about the portfolio entries, and especially the exam, I knew I needed to speak with someone that had completed the process within my field.

In one of my cohort meetings, our leader passed around a list of people willing to mentor candidates. Hallelujah! After searching the Internet for answers (and finding nothing in the area of art), I had before me the name of an actual person willing to answer my questions. This person, Sarah Cress-Ackermann, must be crazy! I e-mailed her right away, asking if I could speak with her on the phone to ask some specific questions about the entries. When we spoke on the phone, I realized that she knew her stuff, and she shared my passion for quality art education. I also found out that she was studying for her PhD and was very busy in her pursuit. I felt horrible asking her to edit my writing, because I realized that her time was limited as well, but I really needed the help. Thankfully, she agreed. She was my new secret weapon! I made sure to give her a second or third draft of my writing each time, ensuring I had a decent piece of writing to show her

Eventually, that portfolio package was sent off and out of my hands forever. This is when the second phase, exam preparation, became critical. "What do I study?" I asked Sarah. I knew what would be on the exam for general education teachers, but no idea what would be on the art test. "Art history" was her answer. Oh boy, thousands of years of the history of mankind, basically. Then she sent me sample prompts that she had prepared to help candidates out. How lucky was I? So, thankful, I sat down to attempt to answer an essay question she had prepared. She certainly didn't go easy on the prompts. By preparing for the worst, I was surprised, confident, and relieved at the test center.

## This purpose was to challenge myself as an educator for my kids. For me, it was always about the kids.

I was anxious and dreading that day in November when the results would be revealed. Once again, I was lucky to have others to share in my nervous energy. I had resolved not to look at the results until that afternoon, as I had a gallery opening for my paintings that day. I did not want potentially poor results to ruin the day. When I woke up, though, I had an endless list of messages on my phone from my cohort members. No one had passed. All of the hard work, videotaping, organizing, meetings, and hours of writing, and no one passed? That can't be right! Extremely disappointed, I decided I couldn't wait another minute and I logged on. A screen flashed before my eyes: "Congratulations, you are a National Board Certified Teacher!" I cried. My colleagues that had not passed are some of the strongest and talented teachers I have ever known. Their dedication, planning, and innovation in teaching are inspiring, and it breaks my heart that they have to redo the process. This just shows how challenging and difficult each part of the process is.

I really believe that it was my work with Sarah that made the difference. Asking this favor from a busy stranger forced me to produce the best work possible. I had to stay on target with my writing in order to give her time to edit. There was a balance of responsibility in which I produced the initial work and Sarah guided me deeper in my reflection. I will always be grateful for how this pushed me to success.

#### The Meaning of True Mentorship

Pershey (2001) writes that: "The National Board certification process prompts teachers to inquire into their impact on individual students' learning" (p. 205). But beyond that, "It can strengthen collegial relationships, build communities of learners within the classroom, and provide professional growth experiences with other educators" (p. 205). Both of us found initial support by joining cohorts. Such cohorts offered guidance for time management, provided answers regarding general portfolio and assessment center prep, and fostered diverse and dynamic mentoring relationships. Beyond the cohort, we both sought mentorship from art educators who had previously achieved. These individuals provided content-specific support and even deeper emotional backing. Albeit small, we have started our own community of learners. The glue that maintains such bonds is a sense of mutual respect, professionalism, and a constant desire for improvement within various domains personally—artistically and within the classroom space. This community will continue to grow as we encourage others in our field to pursue certification and to lend support in various

As a point of departure, and in an effort to grow such a community, we provide a comprehensive list of Do's for future mentors and mentees tangled in the mess we call National Board Certification. The role of mentor is described by Sarah, and the role of mentee is described by Jelena. Such steps

helped both of us in our own pursuits of National Board and may potentially assist future mentors and mentees in powerful ways. We encourage mentors and mentees to reach out to us and to others passionate about NBC in order to further grow our community of support and mentorship.

#### **Steps to Success**

#### Always remember your purpose.

Mentors: Your purpose is to help maintain the excitement and enthusiasm inherent in your mentee. You congratulate them on their successes, and you pick them up when they are down. You maintain complete honesty and transparency throughout the experience as you push them toward personal and professional perfection. You provide clarity when general questions arise regarding the National Board process at large. You answer subject-specific concerns when they pop up. You read draft after draft and provide critical feedback throughout. You watch videos and look at documentation. You provide ongoing suggestions for growth in a timely manner.

Mentees: Your purpose is to produce the highest quality work and to put your best ideas into motion. Research the process and work with a cohort if possible, as well as a mentor. Subject-specific questions will arise. Having a mentor answer these questions and help prepare you for the exam is priceless; be grateful and don't overwhelm them by asking too much.

#### Be mindful of the timeline.

Mentors: Whether your mentee is on the fast track or is taking their time with the experience, create a manageable time-frame that works for both of you. Set due dates in which you expect your mentee to accomplish specific tasks. Hold your mentee accountable. They may not always like your pestering e-mails asking for updated drafts, but in the end, they will appreciate your persistence.

Mentees: Timelines are difficult to stick with, especially in the beginning when it seems like you are working with a foreign language. Be prepared to revise regularly. Be respectful of the fact that you are not alone in this process. Remember that your mentor volunteered to help you. Their time is just as precious (if not more) than yours. Be grateful and respectful of their generosity. If you fall behind, you risk running out of time and losing the guidance and experience your mentor can provide you.

#### Schedule time for relaxation.

**Mentors**: If you have the luxury of being in the same vicinity as your mentee, offer to take them out for coffee or to meet up for drinks. Make time for moments of celebration. Remind your mentee of their primary purpose in their pursuit, and

### and to produce a better version of myself

congratulate them on their progress. Don't forget to reward yourself as well for giving back to the NBC community. Your time is equally precious and you are generous for donating it.

Mentees: Set aside consistent time to work. It might be an hour a day or several hours in a row every few days. If you work consistently, you don't have to feel guilty for taking a little time to unwind. I went on a trip one month before my portfolio was due. I knew I needed to work, so I did so on the plane and during downtime in the hotel. I had a wonderful trip, but also managed to get some work done.

#### Be prepared for tough conversations.

**Mentors**: There may be times when your mentee wants to give up. Don't panic. They are already panicking enough for both of you. Start by simply being an ear. Listen to their concerns. Let them vent. Once they take a breath, you can chime in with your almighty words of wisdom. Remind them of their strengths. Remind them of why they invested in the first place. Remind them that you are available to them anytime.

**Mentees**: Be honest with yourself and with your mentor. If you are not putting in the work, step it up. Be open to suggestions, and really listen to their advice and expertise. They are on your team, and want to see you do well. They are investing in you and your success.

#### Write, write, write, and then write some more.

**Mentors**: You know the process: Your mentee is going to get absolutely sick and tired of reworking each of their four entries. Brainstorm ways to keep the experience new and exciting. Ask your mentees to write small chunks of each entry in a nonsequential order. Be timely in your suggestions for revisions. Ask others to help read with you to offer additional insights for your mentee's growth and development. Consider other NBC leaders beyond your shared content area to weigh in on the writing. For as much work as your mentee is putting into draft after draft, you too must spend significant time providing detailed feedback and seeking additional supports.

**Mentees**: I found it helpful to have more than one reader. I was lucky enough to have a cohort in my district. The leader of the cohort was willing to do an initial reading of the entry to guide the writing. Once I got the general draft on paper, I could make revisions and then send them to Sarah, my art mentor. This made me more confident in my writing and reinforced areas of strength and weakness. Get used to revising. I found that I needed around four drafts per section to feel confident in my entry.

### Don't stop with the portfolios. The testing center can be equally terrifying.

**Mentors**: When it comes to the testing center, think about your previous experience. How did you prepare? Did you reference those vintage art-history books? Did you look to AP art-history resources? Whatever the case, help your mentee get back into the mindset of their undergraduate self. You know, the one that always risked the chance of dozing off while in a dark room exposed to slide after slide of artwork. Make review of art history interesting. Create a game. Visit a few museums together. Start talking about historical and contemporary works and how you might consider them in the classroom environment.

**Mentees**: The biggest mystery to the whole process was the dreaded test. You get the smallest amount of information about this piece, and every certification is completely different in what you are tested on. When I talked to Sarah about this, her advice was to study any and all art history—no short order, considering that is essentially all of history! What helped the most was that she offered sample prompts she had created on her own. They were based on the sections of the test and were really difficult. The website offered a few samples using the program given in the test center, as well. After doing a few of these, the days of art history essays came back to me, and I felt confident about writing once again.

#### Celebrate regardless.

**Mentors**: Previously, candidates would ship off an infamous blue box with all of their portfolio materials. Now they upload everything online. Once your mentee submits their work, be sure to share your immense pride in some way. Take them out to celebrate this huge endeavor they have accomplished. Reflect on your experience working together. Share with them what you have learned during the experience. Remind them that they will be forced to wait a long time before receiving the results. Regardless of what happens, they are a stronger teacher because of NBC and because of you. Relish this!

**Mentee:** After the box was sent and the exam turned in, I didn't want to think about anything related to National Boards. I would drive myself crazy rethinking what I could have done differently or if I should have spent more time on a certain area. It was such a weight off my shoulders to complete the process. I celebrated the fact that I finished, and I began the passive act of waiting, waiting, waiting. When results time got close, I knew in my heart that this experience changed the way I thought about teaching, and that was an accomplishment in itself. I also haven't been able to wipe the smile off my face since the results came in.



With the right intentions, it is completely life changing for both mentor and mentee.

#### Keep in touch.

Mentors: Like many others, your mentee will begin to think less and less about their inevitable results as life begins to take up where it left off. Touch base with them occasionally to talk about things other than portfolios. Begin to establish a relationship beyond NBC. You are both accomplished, persistent individuals. Dare we say: Birds of a feather flock together.

Mentees: This amazing person helped me with one of the most difficult challenges I have faced, saw me at my weakest, and was my cheerleader. When all is said and done, I found a kindred spirit that believes in the importance of quality art education as much as I do. Through e-mail, website exchanges, and social media, I am able to keep in touch with Sarah and keep up-todate on the amazing things she is doing in the art and education fields. I am able to be her cheerleader as well now, as I watch her challenge herself in other pursuits, which is a great feeling!

#### **Concluding Remarks**

For two hardworking art teachers, following such steps resulted in two certifications and an eternal friendship. So, what is life like beyond certification pursuit and mentorship? Still awaiting the opportunity to meet one another in person and share that much-needed glass of champagne, the two of us maintain ties in the only way we know how: electronically. What began as a simple e-mail correspondence eventually grew into the occasional phone conversation, supplemented by our new Facebook friend linkage. Who knew that such a deeply rooted collegial bond could be developed over keyboard conversations? We remain proof that NBC educators are not only passionate, but also resourceful in many ways. While we continue to maintain our own digital ties, we encourage others to consider our suggestions in their own pursuit of NBC. With the right intentions, it is completely life changing for both mentor and mentee.

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The foundational purposes of art education we each embrace drive the actions of our instructional practice. Includes a list of 50 reasons to engage in art education.

# REFLECTING on Our Beliefs and Actions:

### Purposeful Practice in Art Education

#### PAUL E. BOLIN and KAELA HOSKINGS

s educators, we each carry out our professional practice from a specific point of view. This is true for art teachers working in public and private schools, as well as for those conveyors of art information in museums and the vast host of community art sites active throughout the world today. Considering this immense terrain wherein art education occurs, most art educators have considerable latitude and opportunity in determining the art content they impart to learners, as well as in deciding how they go about conducting their instructional practice. A benefit of being an art educator, at times overlooked, is that quite often there are relatively few curricular regulations or institutional mandates to which we must strictly adhere. It is somewhat unusual for decision makers to peer over the shoulders of art educators, dictating instructional practice in explicit and resolute ways. What is actually taught and communicated about art to learners is frequently a matter of individual educator choice, with little specifically directed regulation from the state, school district, or supporting institution.

The autonomy afforded art educators working in the extensive array of art education locations throughout the globe necessitates that art educators regard themselves as choice makers. Teachers of art and those educators working in art museums and community-based art sites frequently possess the self-determination to choose what is taught and how individual practice is conducted (Stewart & Walker, 2005). However, the freedom of choice in art instruction afforded art educators brings with it the essential need to be thoughtful and judicious about what is furnished to those under our care and, conversely, to be critically mindful about what art knowledge and skills are withheld from learners (Desai & Chalmers, 2007).

We each must ask: What do I want those who encounter my program to know about art? What should these participants be able to do artistically because of the experience provided to them? How do learners value the Arts as an outcome of my care and effort with them? Answers to these essential questions become the instructive features to help us each decide what knowledge, skills, and attitudes about art should be imparted to individuals under my guidance, and what content in art I select to keep from them. The formally situated education of others is not a neutral, value-free action. As art educators, it is our responsibility to decide what art content is revealed to learners and what is concealed from them. The art



Figure 1. E.V. Day, CatFight, 2011. Installation view. Originally commissioned and produced by Artpace San Antonio. Photo by Todd Johnson.

knowledge and skills we choose to transmit, as well as what we omit from instruction, is telltale evidence of what we value (Freedman, 2003; Tavin, 2003). This is why it is imperative that all art educators think deeply and passionately regarding what they believe about art, art education, learners, and society—prior to and as they engage in the everyday practice of art education.

#### **Purposes of Art Education**

Fundamental beliefs and purposes drive our daily practice in art education and, recognized or not, our field is filled with a sizeable abundance of such purposes and practices. The following is a list of 50 purposes of art education¹ drawn from writings in the field spanning from the mid-19th century to today, with some of these purposes evident from earlier times. This formidable list may seem, at first look, to be overwhelming in its breadth of perspective toward art education. Our intent in presenting this comprehensive list is not to inundate readers, but rather to encourage them to reflect on identifying from a wide range of possibilities the purposes that motivate their individual day-to-day practice of art education. In workshops the authors conduct,

we ask participants to select from this list the five purposes that reflect most clearly their own personal beliefs about art education (see worksheet on p. 47). As such, the items each person selects from this list reveal his or her individual foundational beliefs regarding purposes of art education, and likely serve as motivation for the art education practices they employ with learners.

### I engage in art education and/or instruct others in art so that learners may:

- 1. develop a sense of appreciation and "good taste"
- 2. increase vocational possibilities and contribute to the workforce
- 3. grow in their independent and divergent thinking
- 4. discover and develop their artistic talents
- 5. cultivate and express a sense of beauty
- 6. gain skills in observation
- 7. recognize and explore the rich and varied possibilities of humanity
- 8. be assisted in other non-art school subjects or fields of knowledge outside school
- 9. have a break from their other non-art school subjects

- 10. engage in a form of play
- 11. develop democratic behavior as an engaged citizen
- 12. be creative and self-expressive
- 13. study elements of art and principles of design
- 14. train their hand, mind, and eye to express neatness, dexterity, and precision through their work
- 15. experience an appreciation for nature
- 16. gain an appreciation for the built environment
- 17. be provided social and emotional growth
- 18. experience a universal language spoken by all people
- 19. explore and utilize emerging technology and the digital world
- 20. strengthen national security, promote nationalistic effort in time of conflict
- 21. engage in the exploration of contemporary social issues
- 22. initiate and expand opportunities to use art materials
- 23. think and work like an artist
- 24. display spontaneity and be provided concrete outlets for their imagination
- 25. experience the opportunity for identity exploration and development
- 26. engage in character development and growth in moral citizenship
- 27. build skills in problem solving and critical thinking
- 28. recognize international connections through art and contribute to world peace
- 29. have aesthetic experiences
- 30. engage in meaning-making through the analytical interpretation of art and ideas
- 31. cultivate aesthetic judgment
- 32. be provided a therapeutic outlet
- 33. recognize and develop innate artistic giftedness
- 34. make knowledgeable and thoughtful choices with regard to home furnishings, apparel, constructed landscapes, and other common everyday objects and spaces
- 35. explore cultural values
- 36. investigate multicultural values and engage in cross-cultural and ethnic studies
- 37. learn a leisure time hands-on activity for enjoyment now and in the future
- 38. experience respect for one's own effort and the efforts of others
- 39. develop visual perception, visual literacy, and/or visual intelligence
- 40. cultivate an appreciation for the local community and that of others
- 41. learn about art, artists, and artistic involvement from the near and distant past
- 42. increase their ability to respond to and discuss works of art
- 43. become knowledgeable consumers
- 44. learn about and investigate the surrounding visual culture
- 45. learn about and investigate the surrounding material culture
- 46. explore religious and/or spiritual aspects of humanity
- 47. engage in the study of gender, race, class, and/or sexual orientation
- 48. benefit themselves and their community through service learning
- 49. explore art and the world through multiple senses
- 50. investigate Big Ideas, Critical Themes, Essential Concepts, or Big Questions in the world

As a numerated list of 50 purposes for art education, this inventory is not prioritized, nor is it exhaustive. We believe this list will continue to grow in length and breadth of richness as additional purposes for art education emerge and as the field of art education continues to expand in years to come.

### Purposes of Art Education Within Art Institutions

Purposes of art education are also present and resonate within institutions—whether these are art museums, schools, or community sites—much like they are revealed when acknowledging an individual's personal beliefs about art education. This is not a surprise, since art education practices conveyed in any setting are not developed and conducted apart from individuals who design and administer them. Thus, it is tremendously beneficial for all institutions where art education occurs to pause and reflect on why they design and carry out their work in a particular manner. What motivates art-based institutions, and educators working within them, to do what they do? What information and ideas about art are communicated through specific art programming that occurs within these institutions, and why? What art knowledge and skill is withheld from participants through these same institutional art programs, and why is this so? To demonstrate how purposes of art education steer the educational activities of an arts-based institution, we explore some of the fundamental purposes and practices of art education evident in a program conducted at Artpace San Antonio, where Kaela Hoskings is Director of Education. In discussing this program, we encourage readers to reflect on how their selected purposes of art education ground the work they plan and conduct in their own art education settings.

#### Artpace San Antonio

Artpace San Antonio is a nonprofit organization located in the heart of downtown San Antonio, Texas, and serves as an international laboratory for the creation and advancement of contemporary art<sup>2</sup>. The residencies, exhibitions, and education programs conducted at Artpace San Antonio nurture the creative expression of emerging and established artists, while actively engaging youth and adult audiences.

A focus on one program at Artpace
San Antonio serves as a microcosm of this
institution's educational programming. Just
as a single lesson presented by a teacher
may reflect features of her or his practice
as a whole, the purposes of one individual
program may reveal the larger scope of beliefs
held by the institution that sponsors this
program. For example, Artpace After Hours is
a periodically held evening event designed
for adults as an introduction to the world of

contemporary art, seen through the eyes of Artpace San Antonio's artists and exhibitions. In the same way that educators encourage students to inquire and make discoveries in their classrooms, Artpace After Hours asks adult participants to carry out exploration in this art environment. This popular event is designed to host casual encounters with works of art in a supportive, non-intimidating atmosphere. For many adults attending the program, Artpace After Hours is a visitor's first time learning about art in an informal or non-school setting. For this reason, the essence of Artpace After Hours is to create an atmosphere for success in encountering contemporary art by providing adult visitors with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to approach this new (to them) art with a sense of confidence, intrigue, and wonderment.

What follows are five purposes of art education that make up the essential educational beliefs of Artpace After Hours, established by those who direct the pedagogical mission of this art institution. Educational programming at this contemporary art site is developed primarily to help participants engage art to fulfill the following five foundational purposes (identified from the list of 50 purposes presented earlier). The Artpace After Hours event is designed for participants to: (1) gain skills in observation, (2) be assisted in other, non-art school subjects or fields of knowledge outside school, (3) increase their ability to respond to and to discuss works of art, (4) engage in meaning-making through the analytical interpretation of art and ideas, and (5) learn about and investigate the surrounding material culture. Each of these five programmatic emphases of art education present in Artpace After Hours is discussed as follows, exemplifying the relationship between the purposes that give structure to the program and the instructional practices found within it.

#### **Gain Skills in Observation**

Contemporary art often displays echoes of art from earlier periods in art history (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Frequently, today's art engages the viewer in somewhat of an art mystery—asking him or her to search for clues through observation. Just as novices investigate unfamiliar territory within the world of contemporary art, participants at Artpace After Hours begin with the acronym ApAH as a guide for discovery. The first letter

signifies Attention. Guests in the Artpace After Hours program are encouraged to slow down in their viewing and to pay close attention to the art around them. Participants are asked to investigate the artwork for details and to propose questions: What materials did the artist use? Are there any hints about how the art was made? What might have been the process the artist used? How do the pieces in the space connect with one another? For participants, close observation and responding to questions becomes a non-threatening approach to looking for clues within the mysteries, riddles, and questions of contemporary art.

Artists today frequently employ new forms of media in unexpected ways. Not readily understood by visitors who are uninitiated to considerations of contemporary art, such work is often given a cursory glance by these viewers as they move on to engage art that seems—or is—more familiar to them. By focusing on observation, visitors begin to gain confidence as they look to find items in the work that no one else has spotted. For example, two saber-tooth tiger skeletons fighting midair (see Figure 1)instantly drew in audience members to the Spring 2011 Artpace exhibition by Artist-in-Residence E. V. Day (New York, New York), but it is a careful observer who could locate the silver-leafed skull hanging nearby (see Figure 2) or the intricate shadows created in the space that add to the story of the piece and help solve a mystery of what the work might mean.

Attention to the details of a piece of art benefits the participants in the Artpace After Hours program in several ways. For instance, such close observation gives guests an entry point into looking at art in an engaging and almost game-like manner. By searching for small and sometimes individually familiar details, visitors begin to feel a sense of ownership over the process of contemplating art. At times, camaraderie among the participants begins to develop as they embark on the journey of looking and discovery together. Observation is the initial step in their engagement with contemporary art. The attention they give to the art sets Artpace After Hours participants up for success as they move forward on their path to understanding contemporary art and assists them in becoming even more attuned to the world beyond the walls of Artpace San Antonio.



Figure 2. E.V. Day, *CatFight*, 2011. Installation view (detail). Originally commissioned and produced by Artpace San Antonio. Photo by Todd Johnson.

#### Be Assisted in Other, Non-Art School Subjects or Fields of Knowledge Outside School

Participants in Artpace After Hours are adult learners from a variety of professional backgrounds. Employment descriptors include software engineering, marketing, accounting, and law. Each of these learners brings a unique perspective to the consideration of a work of art. These participants are not learning specific, school-based subject content in relation to art; Artpace After Hours is intended for learners to create interdisciplinary connections among a wide range of topics and subject areas.

The second letter of the ApAH acronym stands for *Personal Connection*. The definition of personal connection is as broadly diverse as the guests to the program, and for this reason the personal meaning drawn from the work may include a consideration of things such as the color of a particular object or a childhood memory that emerges from observational contact. All avenues of interpretation are open and possible. A focus on art in relation to content areas such as mathematics, social studies, writing, and science, however, is fostered through conversation.

Fall 2011 Artist-in-Residence Jeff Williams (Austin, Texas) created an artwork titled *There is Not Anything Which Returns to Nothing* (see Figure 3). His work exemplified the concept of



Figure 3. Jeff Williams, *There is Not Anything Which Returns to Nothing*, 2011. Installation view. Originally commissioned and produced by Artpace San Antonio. Photo by Todd Johnson.

Personal Connection as the pieces in his exhibition had strong ties to mathematics, engineering, and geology. Precariously balanced in the center of the room were four stacked concrete blocks that had been pressured almost to the point of breaking. The room also included a rock emitting a steady stream of water, and several photographs showcasing engineering materials. Visitors made direct personal connections to the work, such as the rock fountain reminding them of a hiking trip; others commented more abstractly that it was a study in erosion. Participants in Artpace After Hours also began to speculate that Williams' work could be approached like a science project, using the Scientific Method.

Visitors to the Artpace After Hours program continued their sleuthing among the exhibition features, which led to additional questions constructed by the facilitator to help guide conversation, such as: Is there anything in the space that you connect with personally? Are there elements you are familiar with that pertain to your job or career? If you were still in school, how would this work of art align

with your studies in English, mathematics, social studies, or science? Creating a personal connection with the art also helps guests become invested in the process of learning, because they are given the opportunity to share their own stories and areas of expertise with others. These connections help each participant in the Artpace After Hours program to regard how they are an essential part of the discussion, thus encouraging a greater understanding of the vital and personal nature of contemporary art.

### Increase Their Ability to Respond to and to Discuss Works of Art

The discussion of art plays a significant role throughout an evening at Artpace After Hours. Participants are immediately encouraged to begin their experience with casual conversations, utilizing a simple activity drawn from the category-based word game Scattergories. Armed with Post-It notes, pens, and their creative thoughts, participants respond to five categories chosen by the staff that relate to the Artpace exhibitions

and contemporary art. These categories are intended to initiate a conversation about art, which is generated in a somewhat subtle way. Examples of categories include materials used to make contemporary art, verbs that describe ways to manipulate art materials, and approaches for documenting or recording something. For each category, guests are tasked with identifying a descriptor that starts with each letter of the alphabet for each of the five categories (for example, for "materials used to make contemporary art," one might post aluminum for the letter a, bronze for the letter b, or cardboard for the letter c). This quick conversation activity easily draws in participants as they meet other guests and are welcomed by the Artpace staff.

As guests view the exhibitions, they consider the first two steps in the ApAH acronym by paying *Attention* and making *Personal Connections*, actions designed to initiate communication exchanges among the group's participants. The third letter in ApAH corresponds to the concept *Articulate*. Visitors are asked to share some of their findings from

the first two steps in the process of engaging works of art. By this time, most participants have already shared clues with one another that they have discovered along the way and have found opportunities to associate the art with their own lives through personal connections. Initiating the step Articulate helps to persuade some of the more-hesitant guests to share their thoughts and opinions regarding what the artwork may be about or what it may signify, how the art pieces in the room coalesce, and what the artist might be trying to communicate to the viewer. Participants are urged to consider that the A could also mean Argue. By asking guests to explain why their conclusions are unique and differ from ideas of others, the communication among participants grows in amount, quality, and at times, intensity.

#### Engage in Meaning-Making Through the Analytical Interpretation of Art and Ideas

As an evening of Artpace After Hours commences, two primary goals are stated for the participants: that Artpace After Hours will (1) provide them with a behind-the-scenes introduction to Artpace San Antonio and (2) develop skills that help them encounter contemporary art with greater confidence and clarity. The first three letters in the acronym ApAH—Attention, Personal Connection, and Articulate—are introduced not only as a way to guide viewers through the experience of the evening, but also as an avenue in helping them achieve the two goals the event sets out to accomplish.

The final letter in the acronym represents Hypothesis, and quests are asked to draw their own conclusions about the works of art they explore. Educators explain to the group that encountering contemporary art has both challenges and rewards, and that one of the most significant outcomes they are provided is the opportunity to suggest their own interpretive hypotheses about works of art and what they might mean. These hypotheses are not necessarily in-depth and highly polished realizations regarding the meaning of the exhibition, or discernment of the artists' often multilayered and sometimes perplexing intentions. Rather, hypotheses are frequently achieved through more quiet moments of personal reflection and contemplation of the work. Participants arrive at a place in the process where they have thoughtfully grown to appreciate these new and perhaps enigmatic works of art.

While children are often eager to embrace the idea and process of including objects from their everyday lives into works of art, adults frequently push back and begin conversation with the argument/question: "But is it art?"

A brief survey that is filled out and returned by Artpace After Hours attendees a few days before the event reveals that many participants come with preconceived notions and beliefs about contemporary art, and often carry an aversion to what contemporary art is or can be. By way of conversations held throughout the evening and a concise assessment questionnaire distributed at the end of the event, conclusions can be drawn that—by investigating all four parts of ApAH and fashioning their own conclusions about the art they have encountered—guests develop an increased sense of appreciation for contemporary art at Artpace San Antonio and in the world around them.

#### Learn About and Investigate the Surrounding Material Culture

Artpace After Hours has welcomed hundreds of guests since its inception in 2011. Throughout this time, a common thread of reflection has presented itself at every Artpace After Hours event. Participants are frequently hesitant to embrace contemporary art because of the mediums of expression that contemporary artists often choose to use: common objects from the familiar world that surrounds us, rather than moreexpected materials and processes such as painting, drawing, and figurative sculpture. At Artpace San Antonio, all education program participants, adults and children alike, are introduced to the idea that art can be made using anything we choose around us, which often includes items from our everyday experience—the material culture of our lives. The term material culture describes the vast terrain of objects, structures, and spaces that make up our world (Bolin & Blandy, 2011; Sheumaker & Wajda, 2008). While children are often eager to embrace the idea and process of including objects from their everyday lives into works of art, adults frequently push back and begin conversation with the argument/ question: "But is it art?"

Artpace San Antonio artists have employed a vast array of objects from our nearby world to complete innovative exhibitions that help delineate today's art. Some pieces, such as E. V. Day's saber-tooth cats, include unorthodox materials that audiences are enthusiastic to accept, such as casts of skeletons reminiscent of visiting a natural history museum and snakes based on the construction of threedimensional hobby puzzles. Other exhibitions, like that of Spring 2012 International Artist-in-Residence Florian Slotawa (Berlin, Germany), provide a greater challenge. Slotawa's exhibition (see Figure 4) was composed of found furniture; components used in response to the work of artists Donald Judd, Carl Andre, and Katarzyna Kobro; and a series of native flora. Participants effortlessly made personal connections and articulated their findings because of the use of common objects like furniture and plants that can be found at nearby hardware stores. On the other hand, it was difficult to communicate a hypothesis about what these works of art might mean, considering they contained an abundance of objects that perhaps appeared to be a little too common and familiar for many visitors to consider them art.

For educators at Artpace San Antonio, there is a sense of genuine reward that occurs when experiencing a participant's "aha!" moment in their interactions with contemporary art. The greatest payback frequently comes when a guest can gain a sense of appreciation of a work of art that features materials or content requiring the visitor to make an investigative or contemplative stretch. Exhibitions that showcase material culture—the objects of our lives—are ripe for those moments of surprise and awe, as participants feel empowered and challenged to continue their informal study of contemporary art.



Figure 4. Florian Slotawa, *Local Plants*, 2012. Installation view. Originally commissioned and produced by Artpace San Antonio. Photo by Todd Johnson.

#### Conclusion

The foundational purposes of art education we each embrace drive the actions of our instructional practice. This is the case for individual conveyers of art learning, such as preK-12 classroom art teachers and the wide array of community arts workers and art museum educators. Purpose-motivated art education is also evident in an abundance of arts institutions and programs housed within them, such as Artpace After Hours. What we as art educators do with and for those we educate—individually or institutionally—is

predicated on what we believe to be most beneficial for them. With this axiom in mind, it is essential that each of us consciously identify and discern, with earnest, the purposes for art education we hold in priority and do so as we consider carefully what information we present to learners as well as what knowledge and skill is withheld from them. We cannot convey all the information about art that could be taught, thus we need to ask ourselves deeply: On what foundational and purposeful basis are decisions made to include some art information to learners,

while omitting other knowledge and skills from them? Our answers to this question are at the heart of what we do and accomplish with learners every day.

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#### **ENDNOTE**

<sup>1</sup> For earlier and less-developed listings of these purposes for art education see Bolin and Hoskings, 2013; Congdon, Hicks, Bolin, and Blandy, 2008.

<sup>2</sup>www.artpace.org

#### **50 Purposes for Art Education**

#### Worksheet for Identifying 5 Personally Selected Purposes for Art Education

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### From this list of 50 purposes for art education, select and record below the 5 that reflect your own views regarding the most important purposes for art education.

I engage in art education and/or instruct others in art so that learners may . . .

- 1. develop a sense of appreciation and "good taste"
- 2. increase vocational possibilities and contribute to the workforce
- 3. grow in their independent and divergent thinking
- 4. discover and develop their artistic talents
- 5. cultivate and express a sense of beauty
- 6. gain skills in observation
- recognize and explore the rich and varied possibilities of humanity
- 8. be assisted in other non-art school subjects or fields of knowledge outside school
- 9. have a break from their other non-art school subjects
- 10. engage in a form of play
- 11. develop democratic behavior as an engaged citizen
- 12. be creative and self-expressive
- 13. study elements of art and principles of design
- 14. train their hand, mind, and eye to express neatness, dexterity, and precision through their work
- 15. experience an appreciation for nature
- 16. gain an appreciation for the built environment
- 17. be provided social and emotional growth
- 18. experience a universal language, spoken by all people
- 19. explore and utilize emerging technology and the digital world
- 20. strengthen national security, promote nationalistic effort in time of conflict
- 21. engage in the exploration of contemporary social issues
- 22. initiate and expand opportunities to use art materials
- 23. think and work like an artist
- 24. display spontaneity and be provided concrete outlets for their imagination
- experience the opportunity for identity exploration and development
- 26. engage in character development and growth in moral citizenship
- 27. build skills in problem solving and critical thinking
- 28. recognize international connections through art and contribute to world peace
- 29. have aesthetic experiences

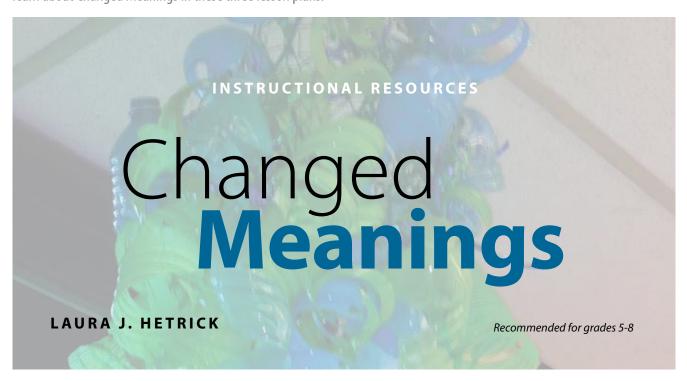
- engage in meaning-making through the analytical interpretation of art and ideas
- 31. cultivate aesthetic judgment
- 32. be provided a therapeutic outlet
- 33. recognize and develop innate artistic giftedness
- 34. make knowledgeable and thoughtful choices with regard to home furnishings, apparel, constructed landscapes, and other common everyday objects and spaces
- 35. explore cultural values
- 36. investigate multicultural values and engage in cross-cultural and ethnic studies
- 37. learn a leisure time hands-on activity for enjoyment now and in the future
- 38. experience respect for one's own effort and the efforts of others
- 39. develop visual perception, visual literacy, and/or visual intelligence
- 40. cultivate an appreciation for the local community and that of others
- 41. learn about art, artists, and artistic involvement from the near and distant past
- 42. increase their ability to respond to and discuss works of art
- 43. become knowledgeable consumers
- 44. learn about and investigate the surrounding visual culture
- 45. learn about and investigate the surrounding material culture
- 46. explore religious and/or spiritual aspects of humanity
- 47. engage in the study of gender, race, class, and/or sexual orientation
- 48. benefit themselves and their community through service learning
- 49. explore art and the world through multiple senses
- 50. investigate "Big Ideas," "Critical Themes," "Essential Concepts," or "Big Questions" in the world

#### **My Personal Top 5 Selections**

I engage in art education and/or instruct others in art so that learners may . . .

A. Purpose Number _	
B. Purpose Number _	
C. Purpose Number _	
D. Purpose Number _	
E. Purpose Number	

Art educators can change the meanings of "professional artist," as well as what constitutes the "correct" artwork. Students will learn about Changed Meanings in these three lesson plans.



rom a contemporary historical point of view, many of us that went through the United States educational system were fortunate enough to attend art classes in the elementary and/or secondary grades. From those experiences, we may have learned "proper" artistic techniques such as painting with brushes, photography with cameras, and assemblage sculpture using clay or wood.

Some of us may have had art teachers that taught us step-by-step directions that were framed as the correct and appropriate way of using tools and materials and told that not following these directions would lead to supplies being taken away.

Others may have had art teachers that encouraged us to explore and play with the tools and materials, reassuring us there was no right or wrong way to do art. This playful exploration typically lasted for a short time until we were loosely instructed on the methods that most professional artists use before beginning our projects.

Likewise, some of us may have also learned about the lives, works, and creative practices of famous historical and contemporary artists. Whether it was stated outright or just implied, we came to know who the accepted professional artmakers were and understood that the rest were amateurs, students, or hobbyists.



Emily in the midst of her artistic/teaching practice.

Reading this brief introduction, some may think we are past those Modernist moments of thought in art education and may believe that now many of us are [r]evolutionary in our conceptualizations of who is considered an artist and that we're more accepting of artists' various innovative techniques. However, I point out that the Instructional Resource is itself a reification of the notion of the professional artist, as well as a reification of what constitutes the "correct" artwork typically accepted as exemplars to use in classroom instruction. In this particular Instructional Resource, I [re]negotiate and change the meaning of ARTIST and posit that my undergraduate preservice art education student, Emily, is the artist that I am showcasing; the actual processes and works of her 5th- and 6th-grade students are the exemplars that can be used in an art educator's classroom.

#### **Curriculum Building as Artistic Practice**

It is here, at this site of curriculum building and creation, that the [preservice] art teacher is the ARTIST, deeply invested in the artistic process that typically includes some form of planning and practicing; creating by sketching/designing/assembling; revising by reworking, adding, removing; creative action and finishing with details; and sharing and reflecting (Davis Publications, 2014). Building art curriculum for any grade level for an entire semester or academic year is an artistic practice. Much energy and problem solving go into the development of curriculum. And just as the process of artistic creation is never completely finished, the curriculum plan for the semester is never completely written in permanence—always allowing for those moments of inspiration and intrigue to persuade the dynamism of unraveling, deletion or re-inscription along the way.

Undergraduate students, like Emily, are taught to create a thematic 7- to 10-week curriculum around a big idea of human complexity. Choosing a theme of particular interest helps the students focus their preliminary research on specific historical and contemporary artists, find and/or create exemplars, experiment with techniques, and provide context. However, "Although big ideas provide the conceptual structure for artmaking, it is not enough for artists to focus on big ideas: artists also require strategies for exploring the content of the big ideas," (Walker, 2001, p. 50). Therefore, preservice teachers' focus on a theme also allows them to construct pertinent thought-provoking problems to present to their elementary (and secondary) students as strategic impetus for exploration of the big idea. These problems are given to the students in the form of key concepts about the big idea and as essential questions that are asked to get students involved in dialogue and thinking critically.

Emily chose the big idea of Changed Meanings, and the accompanying key concepts and essential questions that she developed created a conceptual framework for designing the artmaking processes. She began each separate lesson by having the students show her how to do something as they knew it or had been taught previously—such as how to paint, how to photograph something, and how to make a sculpture—in order to assess her students' prior knowledge of traditional artistic techniques. Since there is a tradition of artmaking, Emily informed her students that these typical art techniques evolved from an accepted lineage of artists that furthermore were modeled by artists preceding them. In the separate class times—once she had assessed their prior knowledge of painting, photography, and sculpture—Emily showed YouTube clips of different ways



Class brainstorming session of *Big Ideas* on the chalkboard.

of making and had a thorough discussion of how this changed the meanings of what, how, and who makes art. What follows are three of her lesson plans based on the curricular theme of Changed Meanings.

#### Overall Curricular Theme [Big Idea]

Changed Meanings is about changing the meanings and thoughts of the traditional and accepted modes of making art. It is to remind students that the artmaking problem is not about changed meanings for its own sake, but should be used as a philosophical impetus to modify, alter, and question traditional techniques of artmaking that might otherwise remain unexamined and unchallenged. This big idea also addresses how the functionality of everyday objects can change once they're used as artmaking tools.

#### Key Concepts About Big Idea

- Traditions can cause ideas/procedures to remain unchanged
- The functionality of everyday objects can change in the context of artmaking
- The art process is about exploration and [new] meaning-making
- Objects can have multiple meanings, and sometimes it is difficult to see an object differently

#### Essential Questions About Big Idea

- What objects or tools do you use to create art? Why do you use these and not others?
- How would our understanding of an object change if we used it differently than intended?
- How might everyday objects acquire new meaning by functioning as artmaking tools?
- Do you always have the "residual memory" of the old meaning after you change it?

#### National Visual Arts Standards Met by the Objectives

- Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
  - VA:Cr1.1.6a- Combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas for creating art.
- Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work
  - VA:Cr2.1.6a- Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.

#### **Lesson Plan Example 1: Pouring as Painting**

#### Contemporary/Historical/Multicultural Exemplars

#### • Holton Rower pour paintings

#### **Procedures**

#### Instructional Activity

- [Have many supplies on demo table.] In order to teach the key concept that traditions can cause ideas/ procedures to remain unchanged, ask a student volunteer to teach me how to paint, verbally explaining as she goes. [Student will probably pick up a brush, dip in paint, and make marks on paper/canvas.]
- ASK: What objects or tools do you use to create paintings? Why did you use those and not others?
- ASK: Is that the only way to paint?
  - Watch video: "Tall Painting" (www.youtube.com/ watch?v=d6egUsZvWu4)
- After viewing, have students explain what they saw.
- Introduce students to work of Holton Rower
- ASK: How might a disposable cup acquire new meaning by functioning as an artmaking tool?
- ASK: Is the finished product still a "painting"? Why or why not?
- ASK: How did we change what it means to paint?

#### Process

- Cover paper plate with aluminum foil
- Select 2-3 boxes of different sizes
- Hot glue them together; largest box on bottom, smallest on top
- Center boxes on plate
- Select paint [already in portion-controlled cups]
- Very slowly pour paint in the middle of the top box
  - · Consistency in pouring is KEY!
- · Layer colors for desired effect

#### Assessment

- Scored based on a rubric including effort, construction, and presentation
  - Scores are: 3 = exceeds; 2 = meets; 1 = approaching
- Written reflection: How did we change the meaning of what we can use to make a painting?
   Is it difficult to think of what we did today as "painting" when we didn't use a brush? Explain.



The pour painting process is just as much a part of the art as the finished work.



One of the end results of a student's pour painting.

#### **Lesson Plan Example 2: Sun Exposure as Photography**

#### Contemporary/Historical/Multicultural Exemplars

#### Cyanotype and Photogram Images

#### **Procedures**

#### Instructional Activity

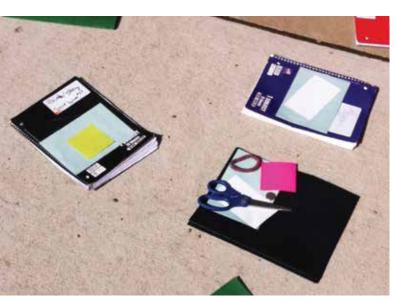
- [Have cameras, smartphones, iPads, and other items on demo table.] In order to teach the key concept that traditions can cause ideas/procedures to remain unchanged, ask a student volunteer to teach me how to take a photo, verbally explaining as she goes. [Student will probably pick up a camera/phone, turn it on, press camera icon, point toward someone/thing and "take" photo.]
- Show PowerPoint of scientific process of chemical photography using cameras
- ASK: What objects or tools do you use to create photographs? Why did you use those and not others?
- ASK: Is that the only way to make a photograph?
- Watch video "Sun Sensitive Paper" on YouTube [there are many to choose from]
- After viewing, introduce students to concept of cyanotypes/photograms
- ASK: How might a leaf, key, or fork acquire new meaning by functioning as an artmaking tool?
- ASK: Is the finished product still a "photograph"? Why or why not?
- ASK: How did we change what it means to create a photo?

#### Process

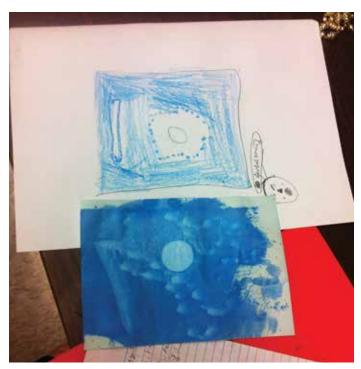
- Hand/take out objects; have students get a sturdy folder out of desk
- On top of the folder, carefully create composition using objects; Consider placement and balance/repetition
- Carefully pick up the folder with arrangement on top and walk outside
- Hand out photo paper [white side up]
- SAY: Once you have your paper, place the folder on the ground with the photo paper next to it. Very quickly turn over the photo paper [blue side up] and quickly move your objects into the same composition to the blue paper.
- Sun will expose paper for 2 minutes only [overexposure will ruin print]
- After 2 minutes, pick up paper and objects and go inside
- Place objects and folder on desk; go to sink with photo paper and damp sponge
- Gently wipe [the now yellow side] with the damp sponge
- Gently dab water off of paper with paper towels
- · Lay flat or hang to dry

#### Assessment

- Scored based on a rubric including effort, composition, and presentation
  - Scores are: 3 = exceeds; 2 = meets; 1 = approaching
- Written reflection: How did we change the meaning of what we can use to make a photograph? Is it difficult to think of what we did today as "photography" when we didn't use a camera? Explain.



ABOVE: Students engaging in the Sun Exposure process. RIGHT: A mockup and final result of the Sun Exposure.





ABOVE: Students heat and twist the plastic as part of the sculpture process. RIGHT: The collaborative efforts lead bottles to a Chihuly-inspired sculpture hanging up.



#### **Lesson Plan Example 3: Cutting and Melting as Sculpture**

#### Contemporary/Historical/Multicultural Exemplars

#### PART 1

#### Procedures

Dale Chihuly

#### Instructional Activity

- [Have various clay/wood/wire supplies on demo table.] In order to teach the key concept that traditions can cause ideas/procedures to remain unchanged, ask a student volunteer to teach me how to make a sculpture, verbally explaining as he goes. [Student will probably pick up clay and mold into a form or twist wire into a form.]
- ASK: What objects or tools do you use to create sculptures?
   Why did you use those and not others?
- ASK: Is that the only way to make a sculpture?
- Watch video: "Dale Chihuly: Playing with Fire" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv3eObQTJn4)
- Introduce Chihuly/glassblowing as form of sculpture
- Discuss concept of upcycling/repurposing/found object sculptures and tie into replication of Chihuly's glass chandeliers

#### Process

- \*\*\*Begin collecting plastic bottles for this weeks or months ahead of project
- Mix together equal parts Elmer's glue, water, and tempera paint inside the bottle.
- Be sure bottle cap is on tightly and roll the bottle to put the color all over the inside of the bottle.
- Repeat with another plastic water bottle.

#### Formative Assessment

 PRECOGNITIVE: In your journal, make a sketch of what the final project might look like

#### PART 2

#### Instructional Activity

- Watch video: "Chihuly's Hotshop" (www.youtube.com/ watch?v=fRJXZcSslao)
- Explain physical act of forming shape
- Discussion of meaning/principle of shape and form
- ASK: How would our understanding of a plastic bottle change if we used it differently than intended?
- ASK: How might plastic bottles acquire new meaning by functioning as artmaking tools?

#### Process

- Cut off bottoms of plastic water bottles [teacher may want to do this before class]
- Using tracers taped in place, use scissors to cut along the lines
- After cutting, blast the plastic bottle with a hair dryer on high
- Use hands to change form through pulling, curling
- Use hole punch to put a hole on the side that will be attached

#### Formative Assessment

 Students will get their drawings back from first session and draw on the back thinking of how the final product might change after today's new procedures.

#### PART 3

#### Instructional Activity

- Watch video: "Chihuly: Through the Looking Glass" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNVo3Vp5VOQ)
- Further discuss upcycling/recycling/found object sculpture and replication of Chihuly's chandeliers
- ASK: Do you think you will always have the "residual memory" of the old meaning of plastic bottles after you change it through this sculpture project? How so?

#### Process

- Punch holes in the spout of the piece using a hole puncher
- Curl ribbon [always pulling away from body]
- · Loop ribbon through the punched hole
- Tie in a knot twice onto the chicken wire
- · Attach the larger pieces first and then decrease in size

#### Summative Assessment

- Scored based on a rubric including effort, teamwork, and presentation
  - Scores are: 3 = exceeds; 2 = meets; 1 = approaching
- Pass back initial drawings; verbally reflect on how closely they predicted the final outcome during the first and second sessions
- Written reflection: How did we change the meaning of what we can use to make a sculpture? Is it difficult to think of what we did today as "sculpting" or "art" when we used old plastic bottles? Explain.

#### **Concluding Thoughts**

Just as Emily changed her students' ideas about how they can create art and what they can use as tools, we as art educators can also change the meanings of the "professional artist," as well as what constitutes the "correct" artwork typically accepted as exemplars to use in classroom instruction. This change of meanings will not happen overnight or without some resistance. At first, Emily's students had a difficult time changing their conceptualizations about traditional modes of artmaking and letting go of their residual memories of the functions of everyday objects. However, once they were involved in the processes, they were completely engaged and vastly enjoyed their new knowledge and ways of making. Likewise, we may have hesitations and anxieties about letting go of the meaning of the professional artist, but let's take our cue from Emily's students and engage with this changed meaning and enjoy the plethora of artists now available to us.

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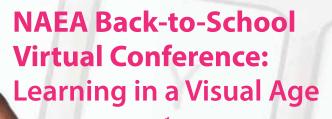
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