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Great Moments in Art Education History
Enid Zimmerman: Creativity and Gifted Children

I chose to investigate Dr. Enid Zimmerman whose significant work has contributed to areas of creativity, art education, and gifted learners. Zimmerman (2010) said, “I have always been an advocate for creativity in art education even when it was not popular” (p. 1); by this she means that her work spans 50 plus years. The summation of her work relies on a few basic assumptions about **creativity**:

- Creativity is not clearly defined and related to dispositional factors.
- Creativity is complex and contextual.
- People are creative in particular domains, such as visual arts.
- Creativity in the realm of art education may be enhanced, stimulated, and developed.
- Creativity for visual art education should envision all students as having creative ability.

Regarding **gifted children**, Clark and Zimmerman (2004) co-authored *Teaching Talented Art Students: Principles and Practices*. They refer to “artistically talented students” (or “highly able art students”) as gifted learners in visual arts. Their book contains six chapters that cover current issues, student identification and perspectives, teacher characteristics and strategies, frameworks for holistic programs, models for differentiated learning, and strategies for assessments of significant student work. They explain the relationships among giftedness and creativity, and despite lack of operational definitions for creativity, they emphasize specific educational practices and interventions to support the development of art talent in children.

Zimmerman (2010) reviews historical figures and events that have played significant parts along her journey, such as Lowenfeld’s child-centered work in the ‘60s and ‘70s, her own research in the ‘80s, DBAE in the ‘80s to ‘90s, and a case-study arts-based research in the ‘90s). In the end, she looks to the future with suggestions for holistic programs that address the child, society, subjects and disciplines, in order to influence students’ creative development in contemporary art studios. “All art students are entitled to freely develop their own bodies of work, become enlightened through critical thinking and creative art processes, and be able to express their own creative reactions to the world around them” (p. 15).

References:

Clark, G., Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Teaching talented art students: Principles and practices*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
Zimmerman, E. (2010). Creativity and art education: A personal journey in four acts. *2010 Lowenfeld Lecture*. Retrieved from <https://naea.digication.com/EnidZimmerman/Creativity> on January 26, 2014.