

Learn and Share: Art Education and Community

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Author's Note

Why art? '...because art matters' has been the motto for Ho Yang Fine Art (HYFA). HYFA is based on a life-long internship in acquiring education through experiences, and continues to support endeavors to promote art, education, and community service. The hope is for citizens and community to keep an open mind in passing on the many reasons why art does, should, and will continue to matter (<http://www.hoyangfineart.com>).

Contemporary education in the United States has undergone many transformations that reflect socio-political, economic, and cultural trends. The art world has had its share of changes too – art periods and movements, art tools and materials, art making techniques and skills, art education theories and practices. Changes in education often have teachers wondering how, what, and where they should teach. In addition, depending on community and personal resources and preferences, students and parents are expected to make choices in how, what, and where to learn.

Contemporary issues in art education similarly revolve around how to teach (structured studio, copy-the-cat, play art, school-standard art, technology-based, mentorship-based, etc.), what to teach (aesthetics, art production, critical theory, art history, visual culture, multicultural, new digital media, etc.), and where to teach (public schools, higher education, community-based sites, online, etc.). But, what may be more important, is *why* teach and learn art: to be creative, to reflect thoughts and memories, to express feelings and emotions, to heal, to relay a message, to express ideas, to solve problems that address needs, to make a living, to project hope, to fulfill a dream, and other possible reasons. For each art educator, the answers to these questions, individually or collectively, may be personal and situational: engagement in art, education, and/or advocacy depends on her experiences, resources, and efforts.

The purpose of this article is to put forth the foundations of a Project to reflect a new program for educators to work with youth in learning and sharing, by way of art and art education in their community. This Project is rooted in the philosophy of democratic experiential education, combined with practice that would (1) incorporate community-based education; (2) involve youth in service learning; and (3) improve sustainability of art and art education.

Democratic Experiential Education

In *Experience and Education*, John Dewey (1938) wrote “when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan...this reason...[is] the need for a sound philosophy of experience” (p.68). To address issues and conflicts related to education, Dewey put forth a “theory that forms a philosophy of education” (p.6): one in which experience, experiment, purposeful learning, and freedom all contribute to practice in a changing society. He emphasized that traditional (old) practices and progressive (new) interests are both essential. He wrote “a body of knowledge needs to be understood...[with] progressive organization of subject-matter” (p.12); traditional and progressive elements are needed in order for the learner to gain continuity and extension of significant knowledge. In essence, existing knowledge (past) needs to connect with appropriate situations (present) in order to make meaningful applications with endeavors to come (future). He encapsulated this philosophy by writing, “Sound educational experience involves, above all, continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned” (p.11).

Experiential education still holds true in many of today’s learning situations: field experience, vocational training, cooperative education, internship¹, mentorship, outdoor experience, service learning, and more. For this Project, experiential education would connect existing art curriculum with youth service in a new program to promote learning and sharing. The relies on active involvement of participants in planning, implementing, and maintaining the program.

In more recent literature, Gude (2009) spoke of ways in which art education helps self awareness, free exploration, and the connection that develops between process and product. She, like Dewey, noted these aims to be dependent on the individual’s awareness, actions, and interactions with the world. With art education, students are able to express experiences through traditional and contemporary art processes and experimentations. These experiences move forward as culture, to

change culture: thus, arts education has the capacity to visualize, articulate, and promote the voices of individuals.

Community-based Art Education

Ulbricht (2005) captured the essence of community-based art education when she wrote “with regard to definitions...several concepts come to mind” (p.6) with “a continuum of purposes... [at]one extreme...programs that teach traditional art skills and knowledge. Others are about learning to appreciate local cultures...At the far end of the spectrum are projects designed for social change” p.10. Ulbricht continued to emphasize that

K-12 art teachers should not be concerned about the duplication of their efforts. They should incorporate the strengths of what students are learning in both informal and more organized extra-curricular education. Since students learn much about art in their individual communities, teachers should build on what they have already learned. (p. 10)

Community-based art education takes place in a variety of non-school (informal) locations². These “artful alternatives” (Davis, 2010, p. 82) have the potential of working with and supporting existing practices. Davis (2010) advocated for the benefits of community art centers that support education. She noted these sites as “safe havens...unfettered by the demands and constraints of school administrations” (p.82). She focused on what schools may learn from community-based arts education; with redirection of educational objectives and opportunities for teens to encounter entrepreneurial experiences young people learn to develop leadership skills that help further global connections. She further emphasized that the value of these “alternate arenas” (p.87) is not in raising test scores, but in raising expectations and performance when they are exposed to mentors (artists and art educators) who do the same.

Existing art curriculum could benefit from the addition of a new community-based art program that would extend experiences. The Program (appendix) would include New Curriculum consisting of two components: (1) curriculum for the Educator to share with Youth; (2) curriculum for Youth to share with Learners. Educators would play a key role in implementing the New Curriculum that would extend learning for two sets of students. The Program would link the Art Site with existing art education and New Curriculum. Educators would consist of artists and art educators. Youth would consist of high school art students. Learners would be participants at the Art Site. Educators, Youth, Learners, and Community would work together in building experiences with significant interactions and continuity to positively impact the future.

Youth Service with Experiential Education

Service learning can play a significant part in community and education³. It, as defined by the Corporation for National and Community Service⁴,

offers a unique opportunity for America's young people – from kindergarten to college students – to get involved with their communities in a tangible way by integrating service projects with classroom⁵ learning. Service-learning engages students in the educational process, using what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. Students not only learn about democracy and citizenship, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform...[it] can be applied across all subjects and grade levels...involve single student or group of students, a classroom or an entire school.

(http://www.learnandserve.gov/about/service_learning/index.asp)

The key to service learning for this Project is the Program and its New Curriculum that would link existing art knowledge with real-life experiences: Youth would be expected to

use previously acquired art experiences to formulate ideas for new lessons, art club projects, and art camps; these art experiences would be shared with future Learners. In doing so, interactions and continuity of experiences would help sustain art and art education in community and within families⁶.

Sustainability of Art and Art Education

In Sampson County, North Carolina, many citizens care about their community. An arts center exists with members and citizens who support programming, marketing, and educational endeavors^{7, 9, 14}. Public schools have art teachers^{7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14} who care and reach beyond classroom walls in support of art, education, and community. In addition, non-formal learning environments exist within religious facilities, civic groups^{10, 13}, private art classrooms¹², and other sites. Efforts put forth by citizens and various community groups⁷⁻¹⁶ have already laid ground work in support of arts, education, and citizenship.

Combining the strengths of an active Art Site, Educators, and Community, this Project would add service learning to extend experiences for Youth and Learners and increase awareness through a 'Learn and Share' Program (appendix).

Methodology

The Program of 'Learn and Share' would combine a teaching method called 'See-Do-Teach' with experiential education. In the medical field, students learn by the motto, 'See one. Do one. Teach one' - one procedure or technical skill at a time. First, the student sees how a procedure is performed; then, she does the procedure by herself; finally, she teaches the procedure to another learner. With See-Do-Teach, learning and teaching are cyclic, shared, and propagated, as in service learning^{3, 6} and other mentorship programs^{1, 17}. Add to 'See-Do-Teach' one more action, 'Relate,' and the method becomes 'Learn and Share.' Relating requires feedback and reflection from

participants, which would continue through experiences. With 'See-Do-Teach' and key linking components (feedback and reflection, interactions and continuity), the Program of 'Learn and Share' would (1) use community-based art education to supplement and support existing practices; (2) provide a new access point for service-learning; (3) promote and propagate the cycle of learning and sharing.

In order for the Program to be implemented, further investigation would be required: what art curriculums exist in public schools and community settings, what community resources exist, what interest (among Educators, Youth, Learners, and Community) exists, and other questions. Based on answers, interested parties would help guide planning: venues, schedules and calendars, financial needs and resources, curriculum development, etc. After preliminary plans, implementation would require finding appropriate Educators and Youth volunteers to carry out the Program and involve participation of Learners. Investigation, planning, and implementing would be phased-in over time, perhaps over the course of one to two years. As the Program takes shape, self-assessments and adjustments would guide maintenance and improvements to meet contemporary goals.

Conclusion

In today's world, teachers and students face challenges in the mechanics of obtaining education: how, what, where, and why. Options to extend education in community sites, could alleviate some of these challenges. Building networks within a community has the power of improving, supplementing, and promoting art and art education.

Blandy (2011) noted the importance of three sites in the network of art education for children, youth, and adults: (1) sustainability to meet today's needs without compromising the future; (2) participatory culture as citizens learning in community with freedom, support, and contributions that connect novices and those with experience; (3)

performance of democracy by working with others, having discussions, building consensus, and problem solving on common issues in order to better plan for the future. Blandy's three sites apply to this Project and future plans with the aim of reshaping art education in changing times.

References

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Endnotes

¹Fall 2009 publication by the Association of American Colleges and Universities featured “The Power of Experiential Education” written by Janet Eyster. It highlighted how experiential education (e.g. internship) plays a role in helping students in higher education become more engaged as citizens and better at transitioning from college to work.

²Community-based art education sites: museums (art, children’s, science), community centers (arts, aging, daycare), private art classrooms, after school programs, coffee shops, businesses, art galleries, craft schools, community colleges, universities, religious facilities, and more (Campana, 2011; Ulbricht, 2005; Sheppard & Villeneuve, 2009; Washington, 2011; Clark & Zimmerman, 2000).

³Points of Light Foundation (2001). Youth Voice in Service-Learning Fact Sheet. National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. Retrieved from http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/cb_facts/youth_voice
The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC) supports the service-learning community (kindergarten to higher education), community-based organizations, and other interested community groups. NSLC is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service. This fact sheet is sourced to Points of Light Foundation, 2001: it is straight-forward, brief, and fairly easy to grasp. Facts define youth voice, its importance and benefits for young people, adults, and organizations, and research that support youth service-learning fields.

⁴No funds have been appropriated for the program since 2011. Due to multi-year funding, six Youth Engagement Zone grants and several higher education grants are still active. All program grants will conclude by September 2013.
<http://www.learnandserve.gov/about/lsa/index.asp>

⁵Classrooms may be formal (school) or informal (CBAE) sites as noted in this article.

⁶Family Strengthening Policy Center (2007). Youth Service-Learning: A Family-Strengthening Strategy. Washington, DC: National Human Services Assembly. Retrieved from <http://www.nasassembly.org/fspc/documents/brief21.pdf> .
The National Human Services Assembly published this policy brief to address youth, service-learning, and strategies to strengthen low-income families and their neighborhoods. It defines service-learning and other related key terms (civic engagement, community service, youth-led, and youth-organized), and notes that service-learning is one component of youth engagement. The brief also includes examples of how schools and communities work together, which then, also supports youth-to-family dynamics. Furthermore, information for interested agencies to get involved is provided.

⁷The Sampson Independent is one of the county's newspapers that highlights positive outcomes of its community. Publications are available in print and online <http://www.clintonnc.com/pages/archives>. The following publications are available for online retrieval:

Dancing with the Stars raises thousands for children (December 31, 2009)

Pigs offer 'swine time' in Sampson (June 29, 1010)

Arts Council tourney brings 'success' (July 5, 2012)

Simple Gifts grants open doors for Hobbton students, teachers (January 8, 2013)

⁸In 2010, local artists and art educators worked with community groups and businesses to support United Way of Sampson County in its awareness project, "Go Hog Wild" <http://unitedwaysampson.org/hog-wild.html>. UW of Sampson County has a long list of partner agencies, some of which serve as CBAE sites.

<http://unitedwaysampson.org/partner.html>

⁹The Sampson Arts Council is home for programming, exhibitions, and outreach for learners and citizens of all ages http://sampsonarts.net/About_Us.html.

¹⁰4H Youth Development is a division of NC Cooperative Extension, Sampson County <http://sampson.ces.ncsu.edu/categories/4-h-youth-development/>. 4H Youth connect with the community and the Sampson Arts Council in presenting its Annual 4H Art Show <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/flyer.pdf>.

¹¹Hobbton High School teacher, Jennifer Jackson, received a Simple Gift grant to extend art education outside classroom walls. See publication noted in footnote 4.

<http://www.simplegiftsfund.org/2011TeacherGrantInfo.pdf>

<http://www.simplegiftsfund.org/LOLGrantHandout2012-13w.pdf>

¹²Ho Yang Fine Art was founded by Grace W. Ho in 2010. It is home to HYFA Academy (non-school-based art education) and artFACE (art *For* Awareness, Cause, and *Effect*)

http://www.hoyangfineart.com/Home_Page.html,

<http://www.hoyangfineart.com/Resume.html>.

¹³Youth United of United Way of Sampson County is an initiative with service-learning qualities <http://www.unitedwaysampson.org/youth.html>.

¹⁴"Golf Fore the Arts" is Sampson Arts Council's largest fundraiser. Funds help support programming, such as Summer Arts Camp.

http://sampsonarts.net/Golf_Tournament.html.

¹⁵"Dancing with the Clinton Stars" was a community fundraiser that culminated in a performance on January 10, 2009; it raised \$168,000 for the education of children in Sampson County. See footnote 4 for publication. <http://www.xodus-is.com/dwts/> .

¹⁶Clinton Area Foundation for Education (C.A.F.E.) is a non-profit organization that raises money to help teachers and students in Clinton City Schools. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/CAFE-Clinton-Area-Foundation-for-Education/313990511950775> .

¹⁷TED Talk: Geoff Mulgan – A Short Intro to the Studio School. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/geoff_mulgan_a_short_intro_to_the_studio_school.html?quote=1087 . Mulgan's six-minute talk is a plug for the Studio School as an alternative mode of education: he noted voids in academic schools that sparked the idea for change. After conversations and research, the concept of the Studio School was developed, prototyped, and implemented. At the Studio School, working and learning are integrated, and this, according to Mulgan, is motivating and exciting. In addition, he reported that students who participated in the Studio School had improvements in subsequent academic tests, years later. The idea of the Studio School is similar to apprenticeships and vocational schools: with focused areas of study, hands-on learning, and guidance provided by coaches/teachers. Collaboration and project work, rather than individual work in classrooms are promoted.

Appendix

Learn and Share – Project and Program

Project: By working with an existing community Art Site and Art Curriculums (formal and informal), Educators, Youth, Learners, and Community would participate in 'Learn and Share.'

Venue: The Arts Site would act as headquarters.

Participants: Educators, Youth, Learners, and Community.

Educators –artists, school art teachers, private art instructors.

Youth – high school art students with commitment to participate.

Learners – participants of Art Site programs.

Community – civic organizations, school systems, businesses, churches, individuals, etc.

How: 'Learn and Share' Program (see below)

Why: Sustain art and art education; promote democratic experiential education.

Audience: Community and more.

Program: ‘Learn and Share’ the Program would combine ‘See-Do-Teach’ with experiential education to develop New Curriculum. Below are the key action verbs in creating experiences in the Program:

See – and actions (observe, watch, review, discuss, question, interact, etc.)
and *relate*.

Do – and actions (create, apply, connect, explore, act, learn, interact, etc.)
and *relate*.

Teach – and actions (educate, share, encourage, assess, involve, serve, interact, inform, etc.) and *relate*.

Relate = feedback + reflection (key components of experiential education).

Program Goals and Tasks

Goal #1 – Art Site would act as liaison among Educators, Youth, Learners, and Community for implementation of the Program.

Task: Art Site would work with Educators in coordinating needs of the Program (hosting site; support, marketing, and funding; participation and programming; awareness and outreach, etc.).

Goal #2 - Educator would work with Art Site in formulating *New Curriculum* for Youth and Learners.

Task a): Educator would be familiar with community-based art education, and service learning.

Task b): Based on resources and possible goals of the Art Site, Educators would develop *New Curriculum* (lessons, art club projects, camps, etc.) for Youth and Learners.

Proposed New Curriculum:

- Lessons – regular (e.g. weekly 1-2 hour class) interactions during the year* between Educator and Youth to extend and expand on existing art knowledge (art and art education).

- Art club projects – short and sweet (e.g. monthly/periodic Art Club, 1-2 hours on Tuesday) art units led by Youth, made for Learners (service learning).
- Art camps – longer and more in depth (e.g. 3-4 days, 3 hours each day) units led by Youth, made for Learners to be taught at end of the year*(service learning).

Year* – September – June (approximate)

Task c): Educator would work closely with the Art Site in coordinating needs of the Program, including New Curriculum.

Goal #3 - Youth would work with Educators as service learners.

Task a): Youth would meet regularly with the Educator to learn, share ideas, and participate in developing New Curriculum.

Task b): Youth would keep a journal in order to record feedback, reflect on experiences, and prepare work related to the Program.

Task c): Youth would commit for the year in order to gain and provide maximum benefit from/to the Program.

Goal #4 – All Participants would work together to pass on learning and sharing.

Task a): Educators, Youth, and Learners would work with the Art Site in supporting and extending art and art education.

Task b): Educators, Youth, and the Art Site would create opportunities to promote community awareness (exhibitions, workshops, public art projects, etc.).

Learn and Share (Premise, Project, and Program) - Supplement to Independent Project was written by Grace W. Ho (February 28, 2013) for Contemporary Issues in Art Education, course ARE 6641 (Spring 2013), University of Florida's Master of Arts in Art Education Program.

http://becauseartmatters.weebly.com/uploads/1/6/5/2/16529980/ho_indiesupp.pdf