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ARE 6148 – Curriculum in Teaching Art

Reading Review 7: A Trio Combination of Strategies for Teaching Art

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Summary with Key Points

Authors of this week's readings present many views that address what, how, why, and where to teach art. When we consider today's hash-tagged world of words with further content, the following list illustrates the different strokes that different folks may choose to "re-tweet," "like," or add a "thumbs down" icon to: #strategies, methods, modes, principles, approaches, dimensions, properties, steps, operations, proposals, practices, orientations, exercises, models, rationales, and others. I have "starred" three perspectives as today's favorites, keeping in mind that this chapter of Curriculum in Teaching Art will be continued.

Marshall (2008) proposes two strategies for "visible thinking" - metaphor and conceptual collage (pp. 39-40). These strategies support teachable and learnable processes of thinking (conceptualizing) by establishing connections (relationships) between viewing art and formulating ideas. She provides examples of artworks and lessons to help students "understand how the mind conceives and shapes its interpretations of reality" (p.39). These interpretations rely on incongruent juxtapositions (contrast, dissonance, irony, satire, humor, paradoxes, collisions) that result in viewing and thinking in new and different ways. Art education that incorporates the use of visual forms as metaphors and conceptual collage, allows students to grasp high-level processes such as (1) forming interpretations of reality, (2) developing deeper connections with concepts, and (3) creating (communicating) with meaning.

Blandy and Bolin (2012) highlight many ways by which to study the "human-mediated sights, sounds, smells, tastes, objects, forms, and expressions as material culture" (p. 41) as it relates to art education and current trends. The study of objects, past and present, relates to life's stories and cultural activities when strategies include investigations, experimentations, and explorations that connect objects with meaning. The authors point to historical precedents and present-day fields of study (anthropology, museum studies, history, environmental aesthetics, and others) that address material culture (p.41). The study of material culture combined with multi-sensory perspectives of everyday life results in "environmental aesthetics" (p. 44). By engaging and thinking, students understand art through personal experiences, feelings, and performances while focusing on the cognitive strategies of mapping, compiling personal ethnographies, and relating to elements within art worlds (pp. 44-45). Art education that includes material cultural studies has the potential to help students identify and analyze, synthesize and communicate knowledge, beliefs, and values that relate to (1) time, (2) culture, and (3) human interests.

Hathaway (2013) unveils traditional methods of no-fail art making created by the teacher, to reveal an authentic approach that is "student-directed...[and encourages] collaboration and exploration of spontaneous creativity" (p.9). An authentic approach that gives students opportunities for personal

relevance, choices, discoveries, and originality, must take place in settings where students think like artists. As studio-based artists, the creative control shifts from teacher to learner. Hetland's [8 studio habits of mind](#) (observe, engage and persist, reflect, stretch and explore, express, develop craft, envision, understand arts community) exemplify the "artistic behaviors demonstrated by students learning in studio classrooms" (p. 12). Art education established in the studio allows students to cultivate (1) higher order thinking (habits of mind), (2) spontaneous creativity (experiences), and (3) practice and perseverance that will extend beyond art and school.

Comparisons

Visible thinking as proposed by Marshall (2008), investigating and studying material culture as noted by Blandy and Bolin (2012), and practicing habits of mind in a studio-classroom as described by Hathaway (2013) are three key strategies capable of co-existing in a 21st century classroom. This trio combination addresses needs and interests of students of all ages, across cultures, and through time as human elements ground each author's approach: senses (e.g. site as visible thought, aesthetics, and observation), thought processes (e.g. conceptual collage and metaphors, visual thinking, habits of mind), beliefs and values of culture and time (e.g. stories, creative activities, material objects). Today's curriculum may incorporate these three perspectives as (1) seeing, observing, and visualizing; (2) thinking, interpreting, and conceptualizing; (3) exploring, experimenting, experiencing, and creating, within various units of study. With these strategies students have the potential to see, think, feel, and behave with broader, richer, and deeper understandings as artists and humans relating to life experiences.

Personal Reflection

Reflecting on the related perspectives that have emerged from this course, I must acknowledge the contributions made by peers and Professor Roland. With each discussion post and subsequent replies, my vision of art curriculum has gained clarifications, modifications, and transformations. The aforementioned trio combination to incorporate visible thinking, material culture, and studio-based practices in my curriculum will culminate as new understandings and applications as I continue to rethink all that may best meet the needs and interests of my teaching and learning environments.

As a community-based art educator who provides private art lessons in small-class settings for learners, kindergarten through 12th grade, needs and interests specific to our environment differ from those in public and other school settings. I am grateful to have had "good intuition" that has guided teaching what may be worth learning¹. But, education worth teaching and learning needs curriculum that will give it strength and endurance for better understanding. As I continue to work on developing my curriculum strategies, I accept the challenges of further thinking, discussing, analyzing, researching, interpreting, and exploring of the changing perspectives offered, not only by authors, peers, and professors, but also by students and my community.

With the knowledge and practice gained by working with peers in developing a wiki unit of study for elementary art education, I aim to put understanding by design² to the test with a unit based on the enduring idea of relationships. By using strategies that emphasize new approaches to seeing and

thinking, and studying everyday objects related to stories of our culture, all within a studio³ that supports spontaneous art making by students as artists, I believe teachers and learners have the most potential to understand and create in different and meaningful ways. Furthermore, I will continue to develop curriculum to enhance my ongoing work with our local arts center, youth, and community through service learning initiatives⁴.

As teachers reflect on the content and aims of what's worth teaching, visions of how to teach for understanding will vary by society, culture, and time. Eisner (2002) wrote, "What is considered most important in any field – the aims to which it is directed – is a value, the result of a judgment, the product not only of visionary minds and persuasive arguments, but of social forces that create conditions that make certain aims congenial to the times" (p. 25). When curriculum considerations focus on what's worth learning, knowing, and understanding, these visions should give way to changing aims that stem from the needs and interests of students, teachers, and their community. At the end of the day, I believe our youth should be educated by knowledgeable teachers with a deep sense of empathy, capable of supporting, caring, and encouraging individual student growth in different ways.

References

- Blandy, D. & Bolin, P. (2012). Looking at, engaging more: Approaches for investigating material culture. *Art Education*, 65(4), 40-46.
- Eisner, E. (2002). Visions and versions of arts education, in E. Eisner, *The arts and the creation of mind* (pp. 25-45). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hathaway, N. E. (2013). Smoke and mirrors: Art teacher as magician. *Art Education*, 66(3), 9-15.
- Marshall, J. (2008). Visible thinking: Using contemporary art to teach conceptual skills. *Art Education*, 61(2), 38-45.
- Hetland, L. et al (2007). Studio Habits of Mind from *Studio thinking: the real benefits of visual art education*. New York: Teachers College Press. Retrieved from <http://www.artiseducation.org/sites/default/files/shom.pdf> on Thursday, October 9, 2013.

Endnotes

- ¹"What's Worth Teaching in Art?" reading review and reflection (August, 2013) for this course is available via author's website http://becauseartmatters.weebly.com/uploads/1/6/5/2/16529980/ho_rr1a.pdf, retrieved October 9, 2013.
- ²"R>A>C>E>" a model for UbD (September, 2013) for this course is available via author's website http://becauseartmatters.weebly.com/uploads/1/6/5/2/16529980/ho_ubd.pdf retrieved October 9, 2013.
- ³"Needs, Interest, Participants" discussion post (September, 2013) for this course is available via author's website http://becauseartmatters.weebly.com/uploads/1/6/5/2/16529980/ho_disc3.pdf, retrieved October 9, 2013.
- ⁴"Arts in Sampson County: An Executive Summary" community research project (April, 2013) is available via author's website <http://becauseartmatters.weebly.com/community-research.html>, retrieved October 9, 2013.