

Grace W. Ho

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Keeping an Open Mind: A Plan for Art Education

Course: Contemporary Issues in Arts Education

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Someone once said, "I'm open-minded to closed-minded people." Initially, one might think, "Ok, cool..." but what does this really mean? The label of "closed-minded" categorizes those people who may not share the same view point into another – *the other* - group. Some labels have a way of categorizing, which could complicate, constrict, and restrict seemingly good intentions. Good labels have the power to help define with the aim of clarifying, expanding, and/or allowing for differences. Keeping an open mind in support of investigation, learning, and advocacy in promoting art and art education, is the foundation for a plan that uses the essence of community-based art education (CBAE), with the concept of service-learning, in a rural community whose existing resources may benefit from stronger connections.

Ulbricht (2005) captured the essence of CBAE 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)

Furthermore, CBAE takes place in a variety of non-school (informal) locations in carrying out its continuum of purposes: 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). These "artful alternatives" (Davis, 2010, p. 82) have the potential of working with and supporting existing practices.

Incorporating the essence of CBAE with existing community resources and practices has the potential of supporting, improving, and continuing the lifeblood of art and art education. By adding the component of service-learning, educators, youth, learners, and community have the ability to recycle and propagate the positive outcomes of learning and sharing.

Service-learning, as defined by the Corporation for National and Community Service¹

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 classroom² 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 in this plan is the desire and need to foster in our youth the concepts of democracy and citizenship.

So, why are youth not volunteering for community service? Perhaps, they are not sure how to get involved, or where to go to put in the effort, or why they should participate. And perhaps they don't have extra time, or they simply don't want to. Perhaps good community services exist, but lack connections in order to provide opportunities for our youth. What if a plan exists that could connect community services (arts center, civic groups) with educators (formal and informal teachers), youth (high school students) and learners (students of all ages) in support of a win-win-win scenario to address the desires, needs, and hopes of its community?

In Sampson County, North Carolina, many citizens care about their community. In spite of its rural setting, over seventy miles from the state's urban art centers in Raleigh, Charlotte, and other cities, it has existing resources that await the benefit of stronger connections.

The Sampson Arts Council (SAC) exists with

The mission...to enrich the cultural lives of the citizens of Sampson County by nurturing and supporting excellence in the arts; promoting, presenting and encouraging educational activities; and otherwise enhancing the growth and appreciation of the visual, literary and performing arts. (http://sampsonarts.net/About_Us.html)

SAC participants benefit from its wide range of programs. Members and citizens support programming, marketing, and educational endeavors^{3,4,6,8}.

Sampson County and **Clinton City School Systems** have art teachers in their public schools that care and reach beyond classroom walls in support of art, art education, and community^{3,4,5,6}. In addition, non-formal learning environments exist within religious facilities, civic groups^{7,8}, private art classrooms⁹, and other sites.

Community efforts put forth by citizens working with civic groups, foundations, businesses, churches, organizations, and various other services³⁻¹² have already laid ground work in support of arts, education, and citizenship.

Therefore, the working pieces of a plan exist: (1) purpose – to connect existing community pieces for the future of Sampson County and its citizens; (2) venue - a supportive art center; (3) participants - educators, youth, learners, and caring citizens in a community that has a history of forward thinking.

“See-Do-Teach: Let’s Recycle Learning and Sharing”¹³ is a critical action plan that incorporates these three working pieces. The plan would (1) use **community-based art education** resources 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 to shape **today’s community and tomorrow’s learners**. With three simple actions, See-Do-Teach, teachers and students would consider the desires,

needs, and hopes that revolve around The Human Element ¹⁴ (human being, being human and human experiences) as a key component in today's art education.

Why now? Why art? Since 2010 "...Because art matters" has been the working motto for Ho Yang Fine Art⁹ (HYFA) in art production, art education, and art advocacy. The essence of HYFA is based on one citizen's experiences that may be viewed as the longest-running internship (1998-present day) to prepare her for continued endeavors in support of the arts, 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.

References

Campana, A. (2011). Agents of possibility: Examining the intersections of art, education, and activism in communities. *Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research in Art Education*, 52(4), 278 – 291.

Clark, G. & Zimmerman, E. (2000). Greater understanding of the local community: A community-based art education program for rural schools. *Art Education*, 53(2), 33-39.

Davis, J. (2010). Learning from examples of civic responsibility: What a community-based art centers teach us about arts education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 44(3), 82-95.

Sheppard, D., & Villeneuve, P. (2009). Close to home: Studying Art and Your Community. *Art Education*, 62(1), 6-13.

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Washington, G. (2011). Community-based art education and performance: Pointing to a place called home. *Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research in Art Education*, 52(4), 263-277.

Endnotes

¹No 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>

²Classroom may be formal (school) or informal (CBAE locations) as noted in this article.

³ In 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>

⁴The 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)

⁵ Hobbton 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>

⁶ The Sampson Arts Council is home for programming, exhibitions, and outreach for learners and citizens of all ages http://sampsonarts.net/About_Us.html .

⁷ Youth United of United Way of Sampson County is an initiative with service-learning qualities <http://www.unitedwaysampson.org/youth.html>.

⁸ 4H 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> .

⁹ Ho 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> .

¹⁰ “Golf for the Arts” is Sampson Arts Council’s largest fundraiser. Funds help support programming, such as Summer Arts Camp. http://sampsonarts.net/Golf_Tournament.html.

¹¹ “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/> .

¹² Clinton 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> .

¹³ *See-Do-Teach: Let's Recycle Learning and Sharing* was written by Grace W. Ho (February 3, 2013) for Contemporary Issues in Art Education, course ARE 6641 (Spring 2013), University of Florida's Master of Arts in Arts Education Program.

<http://becauseartmatters.weebly.com/uploads/1/6/5/2/16529980/seedoteachgwh.pdf>

¹⁴ *The Human Element in Visual Culture-Oriented Art Education* was written by Grace W. Ho (January 27, 2013) for Contemporary Issues in Art Education, course ARE 6641 (Spring 2013), University of Florida's Master of Arts in Arts Education Program.

<http://becauseartmatters.weebly.com/uploads/1/6/5/2/16529980/humanelementgwh.pdf>