



IMAG

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Guest Editor: Steve Willis

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EDITORIAL

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Making/Teaching ART Differently

This special issue of iMAG is personal and powerful. By engaging with art educators globally, it changes what we think we know. It changes stereotyping and biases. As artists and teachers engage with their profession, studio practice, and inquisitive students, methods of delivering subject content has changed dramatically because of the pandemic. But, the desire to engage students at their highest level cannot and should not be limited to a historically seated, face-to-face traditional form of content delivery. We can demonstrate our creativity and flexibility in the face of obstacles and adversity. We are artists and teachers!

Many important directions of Making/Teaching Art Differently can take us on unexpected journeys and unforeseen educational landscapes. Some art teachers will want to continue with the same tried and true methods of demonstration, skill and media development, critical analysis, and historical and cultural connections. However, the contributors to this special issue present to the reader an amazing diversity on topic and delivery.

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How can we determine if we have been or are successful? Is it through active student journals that share personal conceptual development, or it is a PowerPoint presentation on the specific rules and expectations of the visual exercise with examples of other artistic approaches? Or, is it through YouTube video demonstrations, art exhibitions, and community engagement? To all of this, the answer is yes. There are many wonderful pathways for students and teachers to explore.

As teachers who face a budget reduction or elimination at all levels, community, and business dissatisfaction of the creative growth young students can demonstrate, we know all too well that we need to be proactive and engage in the sociopolitical and economic arenas to help non-artists understand what we do. This detailed and comprehensive understanding must be, at a minimum, shared with school administrators, legislators, educational policymakers, and with the local community members. But we can demonstrate our skills as an educator to promote programmatic success and individual achievements of our young artists through reflective and analytical components of student success. We can analyze and present irrefutable evidence so that each non-artist/educator can understand the importance of student artistic engagement at the highest level. We can present our amazing student successes. These ongoing presentations to others should include transparent, non-defensive conversations about: How is my face-to-face, blended, or virtual teaching important? How have I been successful in teaching studio content online? How equitable is face-to-face and/or online teaching for students who have varying abilities, or those who do not have a supportive family environment, or the many students who do not have internet access?

What is important for all of us to promote at every level is the importance of how our pedagogy and curricula have changed to benefit all of our students and the community. As Allan and I wrote in (2020) *Global Consciousness: A Passport for Students and Teachers* with Richards, A.,

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We can accept this challenge and provide effective student-centered, student-directed learning spaces. We can grow this type of student self-empowered learning until it is quite common. All people can link personal moments of awareness and enlightenment together to construct their own strings of experiential pearls to be proudly worn, appreciated, and celebrated. These types of student-centered and student-directed experiences should be found in every learning environment, not just the art classroom. Our learning environment, culture, and personal storytelling should be shared. (p. 26)

We are artists and teachers, and we are amazing. Please celebrate this with your students, colleagues, and communities.

References

Richards, A., & Willis, S. (2020). *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers*, 2nd ed. Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt.

