



ur only constant *IS CHANGE*

Advocacy for the Arts Education Classroom when you leave.....



I was leaving my teaching job, and I didn't know if they would keep the program.....

In October 2019, the British street artist known as Banksy opened a store called Gross Domestic Product and issued a challenge. If you wanted to make a purchase in this store you had to answer the question: "why does art matter?" The issue of art's value becomes far more pressing when policymakers and administrators decide how to allocate time and funding for art education in schools. (ufl.edu 2021) Being an educator in the Fine Arts has many rewards that may not outweigh the challenges. Fine Arts instructors' beliefs are constructed by themselves as well as by others within discourses they encountered throughout their lives. Their ideals and expectations from art and art teaching are also partially constructed by the art communities during their studies of art and art education. In these

art communities, art and artists are regarded highly. In the school system, they are defined by an educational siloed system that has discourses and agendas in which the fine arts are marginalized. The instructors' ideals of good art teaching make accepting the formal expectations of their role difficult where there is a conflict between them. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) There is a difference in the identity of the Fine Arts instructor and their role. Their views are grounded in their histories, both professional and personal, life experiences, current endeavors, and expectations for the future. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; McCutcheon, 1995; Van Manen, 1991) Because these theories reflect their cumulative experiences, they incorporate formal and informal knowledge and highly distinctive views not related to their educational

I STARTED THE PROGRAM

experience. Thus, while fine arts instructors' roles can be fixed, their identities are always in flux and "as the boundaries shift, so do our identities" (Britzman, 1992, p.26) Fine Arts instructors graduate with a deep understanding of their subject area and with rich art teaching practices. It helps them resist authorities that devaluated art studies and to voice their teaching positions, but it also isolates them because other teachers and administrators have no access to these separate art discourses. It is hard for others to appreciate achievements in art education. Fine Arts teachers tend to be the



catalyst to produce endless outcomes.

Decorating the school, sharing the posterboard, borrowing some brushes (which never return), designing the set for the theatre play, spending band class on the opening for open house. Art has low status in the educational system, which has a strong contradiction to the fine arts instructors' expectations and beliefs. (Cohen-Evron, 2002) "My feeling of underdog is connected to the society. As an art teacher, you teach something that is considered not important, as not functional, and not interesting. Who needs art anyhow?" (Naomi, high school art teacher, 1999; Cohen-Evron 2002)

I left my position as a certified art teacher at my private, parochial school to pursue another teaching position. In addition, the school is struggling with leadership, staff, enrollment, and ultimately a decreasing budget. Leadership needs to buy into the value of connectivity. (KQED, 2014) I feel I will not be replaced. I also feel I am the most important teacher in the school. Let me be clear, all teachers are important. There is a tragic misconception when it comes to my job. I am termed a "specialist," which I find derogatory. I am not expendable. However, when a budget conversation arises with the accountant and the School advisory board, it is the first position to be cut. This practice needs to end. (Fussell, 2014) I want an educational system that does not support the fine arts instructors teaching identities and voices to become mediocre, employing technocratic teachers who simply survive in the system. The environment needs to have

conditions that will allow teachers to voice their professional identity and negotiate the formal expectations of their roles. A call for empowering the teachers through speaking out "in their own ways about the lacks that must be repaired; the possibilities to be acted upon in the name of what they deem decent, human, and just"(p.71.) Inclusion of a complete education must lead with the development of creative nature and must provide students with the tools and the technique with which to express their ideas, their feelings, and their love. It must also include the analytical skill with which to judge works of art and exposure to historical art. Finally, the mechanical skills and the aesthetic aptitude must be put into the proper context of authenticity. The influence of the arts in today's society cannot be overstated. The following is an outline of what I did for my school to continue the thriving Visual Fine Arts department.

**Define Policy Proposal and Goals-
Understanding and following curriculum development:**

1. Designed to preserve the school's academic and spiritual identity
2. Educating the students with transparency of curriculum to administration and parents
3. Responding to Support a schoolwide art learning community (NAEA, 2011)
4. Clear understanding of the 21st century framework.
5. Setting the direction of the goals and prosperity to be realized.

Honor Educational value in the visual arts program

1. Bring leadership to the students.
2. Illustrate aesthetic understanding and guidance.
3. Involve the local arts community by bringing connectivity into the classroom.
4. Include information about the visual arts program into the school newsletter, and parish bulletin.
5. Articulate the resilience of students being built through the visual arts program.
6. Illustrate the broadening academic success throughout all subjects taught.
7. Develop increased collaboration with teachers through the visual arts program and global awareness
8. Develop a strong cross-curriculum identity in the school:
9. Refining education skills through staff leadership and development
10. Improvement in the learning process
11. Genuine teamwork
12. Developing pathways for further discoveries

Defending student successes:

1. Education is sustained by students who are problem solvers and critical thinkers.
2. Increasing engagement of students in all aspects of their education
3. Centered in the Person of



- inclusivity and commitment to educating the whole child
4. Distinguished by excellence and steeped in Global Worldview.

Prioritizing Funding Opportunities

1. Apply for grants
2. Use Artsonia funds for supplies and classroom needs
3. Continue to offer the successful afterschool art club program
4. Communicate with parents and offer school fundraising opportunities for the visual arts program.

Supporting Research

An excellent school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st Century skills, implemented through effective instruction. Benchmark 7.3 and 7.4 under Section 2 of the academic excellence standard 7 states “Curriculum and instruction for 21st Century learning provide students with the knowledge, understanding and skills to become creative, reflective, literate, critical, and moral evaluators, problem solvers, decision makers, and socially responsible global citizens.” (National School standards, 2012) Instruction for 21st century learning prepares students to become expert users of technology, able to create, publish, and critique digital products that reflect their understanding of the content and their technological skills. Integrating the visual arts into these framework expectations teaches students to boost critical thinking, taking time to be more careful and thorough in how they observe the world and helps with the development of motor skills, language skills, social skills, decision-making skills, risk-taking, and inventiveness. Visual arts teach learners about color, layout, perspective, and balance: all techniques that are necessary in presentations (visual, digital) of

academic work. (Seneca Academy 2020) Commitment to a visual arts program is a dedication to the expression of being a culturally responsive human. The visual arts curriculum springs forth through the support of solid curricular elements provided by Washington State, National visual art standards, National Education Association, and Office of Public Instruction.

How to make an Advocacy Plan Overview

Develop a partnership with your valued and respected administration, community of parents and students, and parish members and staff, if parochial. I did this by introducing myself through a scheduled meeting with our new principal, current priest, and School financing committee. I sent my previously written letter to the principal, priest, and accounting manager, and I designed a slide presentation to present to the committees. In my school the stakeholders and coalition building members included my diocese, parish, alumnae, priests, parents of student body, school financial counsel, school advisory board, accounting, and staff.

Communication

This plan will start with a primary goal of retaining and appreciating the visual arts program at my school. The information sent out to the listed stakeholders will build on the foundation of success with the current visual arts program.



Make a Timeline

Spring 2024 – Deliver letter to the incoming principal, priests, school advisory council, and School financial council.

Spring 2024 – Slide presentation to leadership and decision-making board members and administration.

Summer 2024 – Prepare for Summer by organizing and packing supplies, cleaning art room, and preparing to share curriculum with incoming teacher.

Assessment

It is essential that it be remembered that the Fine arts are not just tools of neuroaesthetics and cognitive learning, but also a field of study within itself. Arts education allows many of the mysteries of life to be explained in a more visual way. It can help students understand themselves and their creative flow by opening the door to deep reflections, creations, inspirations, responses to form lifelong connections to their world.



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