

Introduction to Fall 2024 Special Issue

Arts Education Is Not an Afterthought

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Arts education is not an afterthought—it is the pulse of learning, the rhythm that stirs imagination, and the canvas upon which empathy takes shape. It sings in melodies, dances through bodies, and paints stories that words alone cannot contain. Through its many languages—visual, musical, performative—the arts invite us to listen more closely, feel more deeply, and know more fully. In this issue of *Issues in Teacher Education*, we present three luminous contributions that reveal the arts not as a solitary voice, but as a resonant harmony. Each piece, rooted in a distinct discipline, offers a unique entry point into how art can awaken, connect, and transform. Together, they remind us that while artistic methods may differ in form and focus, they share a generative power: to make education not only informed, but inspired. This collection invites readers to dwell in that shared space, where integration honors, rather than erases, difference.

In “Watering the Cultural Roots: Expand Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in a Community-Based Art Project through Affective Learning,” Hsin Fang presents a compelling case study of a culturally responsive and community-engaged art education project in Taiwan that seeks

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Issues in Teacher Education

to revitalize the endangered Ocean Hakka culture. By integrating Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), Community-Based Art Education (CBAE), and affective learning, Fang explores how fifth-grade students reconnected with their marginalized heritage through embodied artistic and environmental experiences. Framing the learning process through the metaphor of a growing plant—Rooting, Sprouting, and Flowering—the project highlights the transformative power of emotional and sensory engagement in visual art education. Fang's work makes an ongoing contribution to the conversation around localizing CRP beyond its U.S.-centric frameworks, offering a unique Taiwanese perspective rooted in cultural revitalization rather than solely in racial justice. Through storytelling, community partnerships, and hands-on artmaking, the project exemplifies how affective learning can turn education into a space of empowerment and cultural reclamation. Notably, Fang's dual role as both researcher and cultural participant lends the work added depth and authenticity. While contextually grounded, the pedagogical model holds broader relevance for communities worldwide seeking to reclaim suppressed or neglected cultural identities through art education.

"Embodied Curriculum Inquiry: Moving into Physical and Visual Metaphors," by Marissa Nesbit, Crystal Bain, Michelle Modrzejewski, and Hayley Runge, presents a richly layered and collaborative exploration that challenges traditional, text-centered approaches to curriculum theory. Grounded in a graduate-level dance education course, the authors examine how embodied curriculum inquiry—through movement, guided activities, and visual metaphor—can deepen understanding and transform pedagogical practice. By centering the body as a site of knowledge, they demonstrate how the integration of artistic expression and reflective practice cultivates meaningful connections between theory, lived experience, and personal insight. What distinguishes this work is its interdisciplinary resonance: though rooted in dance education, it incorporates visual art approaches that hold relevance across diverse educational contexts. Its use of metaphor, somatic awareness, and collaborative creation underscores the generative power of the arts to open new ways of thinking, feeling, and knowing. This makes the article not only a significant contribution to arts-based education, but also a compelling blueprint for reimagining curriculum and pedagogy in any field. Particularly striking is the seamless integration of scholarship and practice, which fosters a pedagogical space that honors intuition, sensation, and creativity as legitimate and essential forms of inquiry. With its emphasis on collaboration and relational trust, the piece exemplifies a humanistic and transformative approach to education—one that invites educators to rethink how we engage with knowledge itself.

In “In-Service and Pre-Service Teacher Perceptions of Music Technology Education: An Empirical Exploration of Divergences,” Drew X. Coles, Jamie Gunther, and Cato Zane examine how pre-service and in-service music educators perceive and engage with technology in their teaching. Using the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, the study investigates philosophical and practical approaches to music technology across different career stages. Based on survey data from participants in the U.S. and Canada, the research identifies key divergences in perceived preparedness, technology use, and educational philosophy. These findings highlight the need for teacher education programs and professional development to integrate technological skills with pedagogical frameworks in adaptive, sustainable ways. A major contribution of the study lies in its mixed-methods design—still relatively rare in arts education—which combines quantitative data with qualitative responses for a richer, more nuanced analysis. The TPACK model is thoughtfully applied, guiding both the theoretical framing and methodological execution. Results show that while pre-service teachers report greater confidence and openness toward technology integration, in-service educators face structural limitations and philosophical resistance. Rather than stopping at description, Coles et al. propose actionable strategies for curriculum reform and professional learning, positioning this article as a valuable resource for teacher educators, policymakers, and music education program designers.

Taken together, these three contributions offer more than insight—they illuminate the transformative potential of arts education to challenge reductive, stereotypical notions of what arts learning entails. Far from being ornamental or supplemental, the arts emerge here as powerful tools for community-building, cultural revitalization, embodied inquiry, and critical technological integration. Whether through reconnecting with marginalized cultural identities, reexamining the body as a site of knowledge, or navigating the evolving landscape of music technology, each contribution demonstrates how the arts can disrupt, reimagine, and renew educational practice. Collectively, they invite educators, researchers, and readers from all fields to join an ongoing, expansive conversation—one that views arts education not as a fixed domain, but as a dynamic, relational practice capable of fostering deeper human connection, equity, and insight across disciplines.