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Coursework and Professional Studies in Art Education

Beyond Teaching: Organizational and Management Strategies for the Beginning Art Teacher

Spring 2020

My interest in art education formed as I my talent in art grew. Throughout high school, I learned how to refine my skills in drawing, painting and sculpture. Then, starting in senior year, I got introduced to graphic design. Seeing now my different art teachers all found a way to make interesting and fun drew me into pursuing this as a career. During my senior show, I met a guy named William Maxwell. He was the chairperson on the Art Department at the College of New Rochelle at the time. He told me that the school was going coed the following school year and encouraged me to apply. I got accepted and enrolled. During my time there, I took the usual foundations courses in drawing, painting, graphic design and sculpture. Then I took electives in felt and weaving, collage and assemblage, stone carving and book making. I tried to always challenge myself and take courses that would expand my artistic repertoire.

My art education course begun my sophomore year at CNR when I took Orientation to Teaching and Philosophy of Education. Orientation to Teaching was a course focused developing lesson plans, familiarizing ourselves with standards and developing collaborative or solo presentations about various people, topics or theories. While Philosophy of Education focused on the spirit of learning and problem solving. We discussed educational philosophers like John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks; to name a few. Our exams were all oral. We were asked questions about the text we read throughout the semester and had to answer them without quoting the text directly. Our professor emphasized that it is important to understand concepts enough to be able to explain them in laymen's terms, because novices like students will not be as knowledgeable as us. The class also involved a lot of student produced presentations and online discussions. I thoroughly enjoyed the course, although I was regularly confused during the lectures. It made me think and want to go home and research more about the topics we discussed.

Later, during my time at the College of New Rochelle, I took Adolescent Psychology, Teaching Art: Elementary, and Teaching Art: Secondary. Adolescent Psychology was very self-reflective because I got to understand the how and whys behind the way teenagers think and behave. It allowed me to develop a more empathetic view of the students I worked with through my fieldwork. During Teaching Art: Elementary and Secondary, we learned how to develop art lesson plans and familiarize ourselves with developmental stages and how they present themselves in students' artwork. Both elementary and secondary each required 30 hours of fieldwork. During my time in the schools, I had my first experience applying the methods I learned in school. Finally getting to apply my skills solidified my interest in teaching and almost turned into a love for educating.

After finding out that CNR was going to close down, I decided to transfer to Manhattanville College. I got accepted into their dual degree program and immediately started taking graduate level education courses. I started out taking Foundations of Special Education

and Aesthetic Literacy. Foundations of Special Education was a very straight forward course. We learned about disabilities, disorders and how students with such things, think and function. We also learned about the policies and procedures of how to develop lesson plans and IEPs. The course was very content heavy. I found myself reading 40-50 pages of text from our textbook every week. But all the resources we had along with the knowledge from the lectures made the fieldwork much more fulfilling. We had to visit a special education school, a self-contained classroom and an inclusive classroom for a total of 15 hours. If I did not form that foundation of special education through the lectures and text, I would have been completely lost during my 15 hours. Aesthetic Literacy focused on why we like the things we like. The courses emphasized self-expression and the importance of individuality. I was required to complete 18 hours of fieldwork for this course and I kept a journal of the different art styles and stylistic choices I witness students choose and make after getting an assignment prompt from their teacher. I enjoyed seeing how individualized everyone's work was even though they received the same instruction.

As an inspiring teacher, I am constantly thinking of incorporating my talents outside of visual art into my visual art lesson plans. For example, I have played the bass guitar for a few years and always wanted to do a gestural expression project where I play different basslines and have my students let their hands move to the groove of the music. As the tune I am playing changes, their gestures would change with it. Then the following classes would be spent filling in the shapes formed from the lines they drew.

I have also thought about projects that involve using both hands. I am ambidextrous and tend to switch hands when I am drawing or painting. Although my dexterity is nearly equal with both hands, my style of mark making differs between both sides. I always found it interesting how those contrasting styles come from one person. I am curious to see how my students would react to having to switch hands while drawing or painting.

My goal for the near future is to find a job in art education. I currently work with children as a rock-climbing coach. But acquiring a teaching internship or an art instructor job is what I really want by the end of 2020. The joy I had from my fieldwork is something I would love to experience 5 days out of the week. I am excited to see what the future holds for me pertaining to art education.