

Reflection and Dialogue

This issue is about reflection and dialogue. It is about thinking about what has happened, assessing the situation, and then speaking about it.

I often tell my preservice students that among the most important qualities you can develop as a teacher is the ability to develop a critical eye for what you are doing, what is working, and how you can make it better. That is, as "one of the most valuable tools a teacher has," (Simpson, Delaney, et al., 1998), reflective thinking is an important part of what good teachers do. Wolf and Pistone (1991) note that assessment can empower students to become "rigorous critics of their own work" (p. 8). Good teachers need to use such a rigorous, critical eye to look at what and how they teach.

One article in this issue uses reality television shows as a means to reflect on issues related to student teaching. Two articles employ a dialogue format that is not typical for this journal, although effective in conveying the ideas central to their particular arguments. As they reviewed the manuscripts for this issue, members of the Editorial Board and Review Panel used phrases such as "art educators need to be challenged with this topic" and "a topic that is in dire need of attention" and "we should encourage and support (and publish) experimental approaches and forms." I agreed with them. But, conventional or not, each author provides a specific viewpoint and request for thoughtful reflection about what we do and say as artists and educators.

Student teachers and their university advisor reflect on their artmaking and art teaching as the characters in a script written by George Szekely. Reality television shows are the lens through which Christina Bain reflects on the preparation of preservice art teachers. Mary Jane Zander explores the place of dialogue and questioning strategies in the teaching environment and Sydney Walker helps us see the importance of reflecting on the artmaking

process. Doug Marschalek presents a complex vision of four learning environments that embraces content from design, computer technology, and fine art. John Hicks looks at the curriculum from a vantage point that is part advocacy, part call-to-arms, and part validation. The Instructional Resource, written by Pat Villeneuve and Mary Erickson, encourages students to search for answers as they investigate ways that Chicana/o artists pay homage to Mexican art and artists.

Instructional practices that are familiar and habitual can appear to be quite different after closer inspection and reflective thought. In this issue, Sydney Walker points out that while concepts most familiar to us in artmaking often seem simple, through careful reflection, "their complexity becomes more apparent. (p 8). If indeed "the unexamined life is not worth living," then do we really know the significance of our favorite lesson without subjecting it to scrutiny from time to time?

So, is that really what you see? Take another look and then tell someone else what you see.

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