

My Art Autobiography

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The Arts in STEM: Enhancing Meaningful Integration

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Abstract

This essay examines the experiences I have had with art, both positive and negative, and how it has shaped my views. Some of art experiences include pottery, music, dancing, singing, and playing instruments. The essay is split into three parts. The first part, recall, focuses on the memories of all of my art experiences. The second part, reflect, goes deeper into why these experiences were memorable and finding commonalities between the experiences that were meaningful and what commonalities existed that acted as a turnoff to art. Reflect, as the name suggests, is a reflection of myself in art and I dive into what constitutes success and if based on that idea, if I am successful in art. The final component, connect, makes a connection between my past experiences and how that has shaped my definition and views of art.

Recall

One of my earliest art memories is going to an arts festival around age 5. One of the stations I went to was pottery, I made a heart shaped bowl. The instructions that were given to my parents were to put the bowl in the oven for a certain amount of time and heat. While I took a nap, my parents put the my bowl in the oven. Unfortunately, it exploded. So, they called the art center explaining what had happened and I ended up getting one-on-one art sessions and made, glazed and fired 2 bowls.

As an elementary schooler for a few summers, I went to a summer school art and it was awesome. One summer, the theme was ancient egyptians. The next summer was pop-art. I still have some of my creations. I also really enjoyed my school art class. For a few years, I took dance classes. I remember the costumes very vividly and one of our recital pieces was from *Beauty and the Beast*. I think my last recital was "Quit Playing Games with my Heart" by the Backstreet Boys. In fifth grade, I was also a member of the Indianapolis Children's Choir. I was also in 4-H, which may not seem like an art, but my programs were cake decorating and cake decorating. When I was a baby, my grandfather bought my family a piano because he said I had long fingers and would be good at piano. I played piano off and on through high school, but I hated practicing, so eventually that fell by the wayside. I did acquire the skill to read music though.

When I was in 6th and 7th Grade, my family lived in England, so I had a non-traditional middle school education, but that included a variety of arts. We had a rotation of classes, equivalent to home-ec. It included woodshop - where I cut my finger multiple times with a saw, graphic design - where I struggled to draw a straight line, cookery - which was delicious and textiles - where I broke a sewing machine needle three times and my teacher said that she'd never seen that happen before. I didn't really enjoy art class in middle school because it was mostly just drawing. I did however take a dance class at school. I was also in drama club. I didn't get the best grades in art and I couldn't figure out how to improve my drawing skills. In 8th grade, I chose art class over band and I remember one of our big projects was pottery. I ended up making Tinkerbell's shoe. I had all different glazes on it, but it was so heavy! I was also in art club and we ended up making breast cancers ribbons as a project.

In high school, I took art classes. I really enjoyed my Textiles class because we got to create a 3D art journal, make a batik with wax, listen to music while we worked and I took it with my best friend. One of my favorite college classes was Art in the Elementary School. I really enjoyed it because the class was all about making connections between art and other subjects, especially literacy. I did not like my Music in the Elementary School class however. This was mostly due to the fact that so much of the class was devoted to the recorder, which I did not have fond memories of from 4th grade and the main reasons why I didn't choose band in middle or high school. Right before

we were leaving for Spring Break, our teacher asked who would be practicing over the week. She called me out in front of the whole class and said that I should definitely take mine with me. Other less embarrassing art encounters were going to All Fired Up! (a pottery studio) and singing in the church choir.

In preparing for my wedding, I got into calligraphy and painted signs. I really enjoy dancing, especially at weddings, however I wouldn't say that I've had much formal dance training. I found a word that describes my "dancing" and I prefer the definition from urban dictionary, "to dance artlessly, without particular grace or skill but usually with enjoyment."

Reflect

I haven't ever made a list and it's interesting to look back on my art-based school and extracurricular activities. I really enjoyed my variety of art experiences and until now, I never realized how many I had. What made the experiences meaningful are when I enjoyed myself, felt free to create and when my teachers/leaders were helpful guides. I didn't seem to stick with one "art" for long because I didn't feel like I was good at it or it was too rigid for me. My elementary school art teachers and dance teachers were very kind and helpful. I was by no means the best dancer or student in their classes, but they didn't treat me differently and I loved the classes. I didn't like art in middle school because I felt like it was too rigid and I wasn't doing it "right." I remember making a my middle I didn't stick with ICC because the songs were mostly classical and we had to have correct posture and mouth movements.

Despite this, I feel like I have been successful in art overall because I have been able to represent myself in a creative way. I would not consider myself an artist, per se, I would consider myself a creative individual.

Connect

My definition of art is a visual and creative representation. The representation can be of a person, an object, a place, an idea, an event, a concept or a mood. The visual representation can be using a variety of media, both digital and physical. It can be multidimensional. I think my past learning experiences have shaped my definition because it has broadened what I view as art. Since I have been able to experience such a variety, I have been able to see art from different perspectives. I think there were periods of time that my attitude for art was negative because I thought that what I was creating was wrong, incorrect, flawed or simply not good enough. Part of that comes from my harsh internal critic. Through my reflection, I have realized the impact that a teacher's comment can have and how it can squelch the creative desires. I hope that I am able to incorporate art in my classroom and allow students to find their own art.

References

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