Art Autobiography

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Recall

As a music education major at Westminster, art is a strong component to my professional and personal life. Music started at a young age with singing in church and taking infrequent piano lessons. In late high school, I developed my love of singing in the choral program and teaching private music lessons to young students. Though my experience in art is primarily through music, I also studied visual art in high school. There, I found my love of painting and doodling. I chose music as an academic career, however, because I knew I wanted to teach, and I saw myself teaching music more than visual art.

My earliest experience with art was dancing around the basement with my family when I was a toddler. I recall my mom switching the CD's from children's songs to classic rock greatest hits. There, I remember the joy of spending time with my family and dancing.

The most recent memorable experience I have with music so far is when I sang Peter Relph's *Requiem* this summer as a part of a choral experience in Oxford, UK. This piece is centered on the stages of grief, and days earlier I received news that my grandfather died. The Relph *Requiem* helped me through grieving over my grandfather while I was in another part of the world for the first time in my life.

At the top of my meaningful artistic experiences, however, was singing my three pieces *Songs from the Voices Inside My Head* at my senior recital. Those songs are the reflection of my growth through understanding the cycles of my depression, and I finally overcame the fear of writing and performing music that reflects my personal experiences.

Reflect

Because art is a professional outlet, I faced difficulty using music as an emotional outlet or for relaxation. I used to compose frequently prior to my experience at Westminster; it was a personal outlet for me to let out my feelings. Now music feels tedious, and for years I struggled with finding enjoyment outside of academic analysis. To remedy this, every semester I learned a new creative craft, such as crochet, sewing, and embroidery. This provided something 'mindless' for me to destress from school. Finally, I overcame the fear of not being good enough, and wrote with the intention of connecting with myself, which resulted in *Songs from the Voices Inside My Head*.

As someone involved in the arts, I have hesitancies toward integrating my curriculum with colleagues in STEM. The first of these reservations is my lack of experience in STEM courses. My friends frequently joke, saying 'I haven't taken a math class since 2015,' or 'The last science homework I finished was in high school.' Bequette & Bequette (2012) also caution against curricular cooperation due to the unknown intentions of colleagues in other disciplines. However, the remedy for this is to communicate earnestly, but with functional design (Bequette & Bequette, 2012).

Connect

Since this art autobiography is from the perspective of an art teacher, I decided to approach the 'connect' component through the lens of being the art teacher in a STEM curriculum. I define music as organized sound. The function of art, however, is to be a personal, cultural, and societal connection of ideas, feelings, and perspectives. The National Core Arts Standards (2014) includes 'Connect' as one of the main artistic processes. Connecting is important because it puts art in the context of the world. Art is not art without people creating it.

As a preservice music teacher, I believe art is essential to a well-rounded education. As a teacher I refuse to hide in my music classroom because I know it's important to not only connect students' learning across multiple disciplines, but also to set myself as a role model in working with my coworkers for the success of others. During my student teaching experience,

I believe one of the strongest attributes to a STEAM curriculum is the interdisciplinary lesson making. According to Liao (2016), an interdisciplinary curriculum includes at least two disciplines, and a strong goal of real-world application. By integrating the arts into a STEM curriculum, students may develop creative practices to strengthen their ability to be innovative. Land (2013) posits concerns about the decrease in American innovation, stating that college graduates were taught from a behavioral perspective of education, where students can accomplish tasks, but lack components of critical thinking such as curiosity and self-motivation.

My largest apprehension with teaching art in my future is the possibly limited amount of resources. I hope to bring my students to rehearsal field trips, and buy multiple music technologies (such as Makey-Makeys, music-making computer software, and materials to make student-designed instruments). I hope to resolve this through creating new opportunities for students to make music through the technology and curricular resources already existing in their department as well as other departments as a part of an integrative curriculum.

References

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