My Art Autobiography
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Recall

When I think back on my past art experiences, my first vivid memories come from my experience outside the classroom. From age 5 through age 18, I participated in a church program called L2L, that allowed and encouraged children like myself to experience the many different aspects of church and worship. L2L gives children opportunities to read scripture, give a speech, lead a song, and/or perform a puppet show in front of a fairly large group of people, along with so many other things This program gives children the chance to create themed artwork, write themed music lyrics, and design a poster or scrapbook, all based on the yearly theme.

If you had asked me back then what parts of L2L were "art", I would have told you drawing, sketching, scrapbook-making, photography, and poster designing. But when I really stop and think about it, almost every aspect of this program is really art, because it allowed me to express myself through many different avenues. Having the ability to express my thoughts and views through a speech, or to show my love for God through song, were probably truer forms of art than the actual drawing and coloring I did years ago.

I always remember being so proud of the art that I created, until I took a look at some of the other artwork that mine was being judged against.. Sometimes I would win a ribbon for what I created, but most of the time I wouldn't. Thankfully, I had a mom and church family that encouraged me in everything that I did, who didn't let me get down on myself because my artwork didn't win a ribbon or trophy.

Looking back on my school art experiences, there are 2 things I do remember. The first was my K-2 Art teacher, Mrs. Lawson. She was always kind and complimentary of my

artwork, no matter what it was. She was never judgmental, even when she gave me suggestions on how to make my artwork better. The second, and most memorable art experience I have from school, was a pumpkin decorating contest I participated in back in 4th grade. We were asked to create a character from our favorite book out of a pumpkin, and then display it with all of the other characters created by our 4th grade classmates at the front entrance to our elementary school. I chose to make a possum from Possum Come a-Knockin', because it was my absolute favorite book at that time. I can still see that pumpkin possum in my mind! Looking back now, I can see why my mom was less than thrilled with my choice of characters.

Reflect

It makes me laugh that when I look back on my most memorable art experiences, school experiences weren't the first to come to mind. But, it also makes me stop and wonder why. I know I created artwork for my teachers to hang in the hallways at school - but I also know that I always compared my work to my classmates' work. I remember that my mom was always hanging up whatever I created at school on our fridge at home, and how it always made me feel good that she would want to hang up what I created. I know that I went through lots of coloring books in my elementary years, too. Lisa Frank was my jam!

Looking back now, I also realize that I had more art experiences growing up than I fully realized back then. I took piano lessons from several different teachers. This allowed me to play for my parents, to play with my dad and learn from his style of reading music, and to play with my grandmother. I remember sitting in awe of both my dad and grandmother as they played from memory. I just knew that they could play any piece of

music you put in front of them. Cooking with my family is another "artsy" experience from the past. I didn't see it as art then, but thinking about the cooking abilities and skills so many of the ladies in my family had (and still have), they truly were able to use their cooking talents to reach and bless the people around them..

I don't think I was turned off by my art experiences in the classroom. I just think my experiences outside the classroom are more memorable because of the people I shared them with and because my heart was more connected to what I was doing, much more than it was when I was creating "art" in my classrooms.

Have I been successful in my artwork? I think so! I have learned to play the piano and cook. I have learned to doodle and write. I have learned how to do many other crafty things, as well. I am working on bettering myself at using technology to design and create, too. I don't feel like I will ever use these talents to make money, which is what some would consider "success", but I do feel that I can use my talents and abilities to express myself and to reach those around me.

Connect

Art to me is so many things.

Art is self-expression. It's a way to show who you are, what you love, and to display your talents and passions to others.

Art can also be a coping mechanism for tough times in life. It's a way to release and process feelings and life circumstances. It can be a way to escape reality for a little while, and make it easier to make it through the next tough day.

Art is fun. No matter how old you are, there is some form of art that you can get lost in and just enjoy.

Art is meaningful. Every artist has a passion, and their artwork shows their feelings and their heart.

Art is important. I can't begin to imagine a world without music or paintings. I can't imagine a world without incredible stories and lyrics. Life would be so boring and bland.

Even though I don't consider myself to be "an artist", I know that if I feel all of these things about art, and if I can look back and so clearly recall the art experiences that meant so much to me, it is vital that I give my students more opportunities for meaningful art experiences in my classroom.