



# Gazette

*Service Knowledge Leadership Professional Development*

www.marylandarted.org

Spring/Summer 2014



## CELEBRATING OUR COLLEAGUES: WHAT MAKES A GREAT ART EDUCATOR?

### **RAVEN BISHOP**

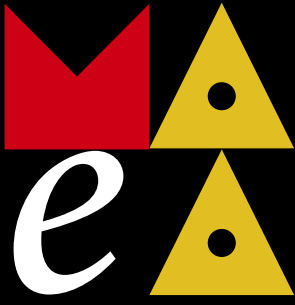
Art Teacher at Severn Middle School  
Anne Arundel County Public Schools  
MAEA Middle Level Division Director

**W**alk into Erika Oldershaw's classroom and one thing becomes instantly clear—she knows her students. She greets each one by name at the door with a smile and often a “How was your soccer game?” or “Are you feeling better? I

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Elizabeth Stuart  
Elizabeth\_G\_Stuart@mcpsmd.org

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GINO\_MOLFINO@hcpss.org

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pat@yamd.org

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nparkumbaugh@mica.edu

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jtucker@msde.state.md.us

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Eleni Dykstra  
Maea.dykstra@gmail.com

#### Parliamentarian

Linda Adams  
Linda\_Adams@mcpsmd.org

#### Gazette Editor

Elisa Patterson  
e-patterson@nga.gov

#### Gazette Designer

Susanna Fields-Kuehl  
s-fields-kuehl@nga.gov

#### Cover Artwork:

Tara B.  
Damascus High School  
Montgomery County  
Public Schools

### ELIZABETH STUART

President MAEA

Happy Summer! I hope you all are having a relaxing summer so far and are enjoying some much needed rest and relaxation. We had a jam packed spring with a BWI Airport student show opening, the dismantling of the Treasury Show in Annapolis, and the very popular "Clay Canvas" workshop. Here are some of the things the MAEA board is working hard on this summer:

- New and improved website, launching late August 2014! A new look, easier to navigate, lots of new member tools and supports
- Fall Conference: Save the Date! Friday, October 17, 2014 at River Hill High School. The theme this year is "Design, Engage, Interact: Creativity Transforming Practice"
- Summer Board Meeting: Creation of the MAEA *Policies and Procedures* manual
- 2014-2015 Professional Development Plan: In various locations throughout Maryland with new, exciting topics

If you have not done so already, please mark your calendars now for the fall conference. We have some exciting new changes and ideas coming to our fall conference and you won't want to miss it.

I hope you all have a restful summer. You will be hearing from us very soon about the launch of our new website!

Elizabeth Stuart, MAEA President

### MAEA STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

*The purpose of this organization is to encourage, strengthen, and promote the role of the visual arts in education by: promoting quality instruction in visual arts education conducted by certified art teachers; encouraging study of art teaching; improving the conditions of art teaching; and encouraging and conducting research in art education. To these ends the Association will: hold public discussions; sponsor institutes, conferences and programs; publish articles, reports and surveys; and work with other related organizations to provide advocacy for arts education.*



**MARK COATES RECEIVES THE AEMS AWARD**

Special congratulations to Mark Coates who received the AEMS Award for ***Outstanding Leadership in Arts Education*** at CAFÉ on May 29, 2014. The Cultural Arts for Education conference is run by AEMS ([www.aems-edu.org](http://www.aems-edu.org)), an organization dedicated to making sure all Maryland public school students have equitable access to arts education.

*Mark is the Coordinator for Fine Arts in Howard County Public Schools.*

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# CELEBRATING OUR COLLEAGUES...

## *(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)*



missed you last time when you were absent.” Hanging next to the entrance of her classroom is a bulletin board covered in newspaper clippings celebrating her students’ successes in sports, academics and scouting as well as programs from community theatre performances and dance recitals that her students have performed in this year (many of which she has attended). She knows why the boy in

the front row wears the same sweatshirt every day (it belongs to his brother who attends college far away). The message all this conveys to students: “I care about you. Not just you, the artist, but you—the special and wonderful person sitting in my classroom.” The mother of three children, Erika is a nurturer at heart. What makes her a great art educator is that she approaches teaching with nurturing and instruction in tandem—a powerful combination that draws the very best from her students.

What makes Erika a great colleague is that she cultivates a relationship with her colleagues with the same “it’s the little things” approach that she shares with her students. It is not unusual to find a potted plant or candy bar along with a beautiful card filled with encouraging words written in her delicate script on the day you will be observed by the principal. She brings in articles she has clipped out of magazines because they just reminded her of you or because she remembered you like gardening. She never includes mushrooms in the faculty breakfast quiche because she remembers that one of our English teachers is allergic to them. She is a joy to collaborate with because she naturally creates a feeling of familiarity and welcome with all of the teachers here at our school.

A great colleague is someone from whom you can learn and enhance your own practice. Erika joined our Art department four years ago and working closely with her has informed and improved my practice. Watching Erika gracefully cultivate relationships with her students

has taught me—a generally “big picture” thinker—that the “little things” are very important in reaching the young people in our classrooms. Soccer games and dance recitals; food aller-

gies and favorite sweatshirts—these are the pathways through which Erika connects to her students; pathways that, from her example, I have learned to walk as well.

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## *An interview with Erika Oldershaw*

Years Teaching: 7

Currently Teaches: Grades 6-8 Visual Arts

Severn River Middle School

Anne Arundel County Public Schools

### **WHO OR WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME AN ART TEACHER?**

The arts and teaching have always been a part of my life from the very beginning. I grew up in a family of educators, musicians and visual artists. All of my school experiences in the arts were positive and I had wonderful teachers. Academically I struggled, but art was the one place I could express myself and be understood. The one teacher that inspired me most was my Junior High Art teacher Nancy McClintock. I also had the pleasure of teaching with her for one year. She also taught my daughter Sarah and was instrumental in helping her apply and be accepted into the Gifted and Talented Program for the Visual Arts. What inspired me the most about Nancy (Ms. McClintock) was her genuine interest in her students' artwork but also, who they were as individuals. She made all of her students feel welcome and appreciated.

### **WHO OR WHAT INSPIRES YOU NOW?**

My students have always inspired me. They have wonderful insights, ideas, and new ways of solving artistic problems. Students need to feel that their art making is essential. I love it when students are excited about what we are doing in the classroom or when they bring their sketchbooks on Monday mornings and can't wait to show me the new sketches they have worked on over the week end. I also have an amazing colleague, Raven Bishop, who inspires me. She is patient and genuinely always ready to help in any way she can whether it's collaborating on a project or creating a new teaching strategy to help me or our students. We are a team and that is so important to me. What we learn from our collaboration broadens and enriches the learning experience of our students.

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**WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB AS AN ART EDUCATOR?**

I love working with my students and getting to know them as artists and on a personal level. I think it is extremely important to understand and appreciate their different personalities and to establish a bond so that they feel comfortable expressing their ideas and concerns creatively in a classroom setting. I am a firm believer that students need to feel that they belong to a community of artists.

**AS AN ART EDUCATOR, WHAT'S BEEN ON YOUR MIND LATELY?**

In all areas of education we must teach our students that making mistakes is an important part of how we learn. I have noticed and heard students say that “I would rather not do the task than try and possibly have it be wrong.” I believe this comes from a new generation of students who have so much pressure to be perfect that they have missed the importance of failure. Students need to be taught that failure is acceptable and that successes can come from this. “Each time you fail,” says painter Fernando Gerassi, “you learn something. If you have faith in yourself, you accept the failure and go on.” Sketchbook journaling is a tool that works well when students want to express what they have learned that has gone well and what they might do differently next time. This exercise allows the student to look at the strengths and weaknesses in a positive way. One of my sixth graders, Tristan, responded to making a mistake “Mistakes are the best kind when they end up turning into something good!”

**WHAT IS YOUR ONE BEST “TRICK OF THE TRADE”?**

I have just recently found a new “trick of the trade” for times when students fidget and need to move around. I stop and do different types of “Brain Breaks.” Students are encouraged to get up and move individually or with a partner and it gives their brains a chance to re-energize. I also play music of different genres daily during observational drawings or during studio time—as they say “music calms the savage beast.” Books on tape are also great to use in the classroom too.

**WHAT ART MATERIAL IS CAN YOU NOT LIVE WITHOUT IN YOUR ART ROOM?**

Handmade Sketchbooks! A few years ago our department began having our students make their own sketchbooks. They are just cardstock and drawing paper that we have sewn together, but the students love them! The students enjoy making them and are personally invested in the art making process. They enjoy creating their covers of inspiration and take them home frequently to work on outside of the classroom. Their sketchbooks give the students a sense of ownership and control of the art making process.

# SPRING SERIES



**GINO MOLFINO**

Visual Arts Resource Teacher  
Howard County Public Schools  
President-Elect, MAEA

**SHERRI FISHER**

Visual Art Department Chair  
Patapsco High School & Center for the Arts  
Baltimore County Public Schools  
MAEA Program Committee Vice-President

This 2014 spring season, the MAEA introduced a new series of professional learning

experiences for our art education community. The *CONNECT SERIES* strives to bring Maryland artists and educators together to work with exciting material and conceptual techniques that can be merged into daily classroom practices.

**MAEA PUPPETS AND POETRY SLAM WORKSHOP**

On May 15th over 30 educators gathered at Young Audiences space at Miller's Court for what was a truly a wonderful day learning new strategies for the classroom with Gayle Danley



(slam poet) and Michael Lamason (Black Cherry Puppet Theatre). This workshop drew a diverse group of educators from a variety of fields and with varying levels of experience. The day began with a collaborative performance where Gayle demonstrated her process of writing stream of consciousness while Michael demonstrated his improv techniques of puppetry construction and performance. From there the day was broken into two sessions that focused on the power of storytelling from two different approaches. In the first session Gayle began by taking the group through a series of prompts aimed at getting us to write and edit with purpose. This was not some typical dry writing exercise; her prompts were provocative and her strategies enlightening. Deep emotions were shared and the quiet among us stood up and performed their texts with confidence. There were some great connections, collaborations, strategies, and ideas shared by all.

The second session was lead by Michael Lamason. Michael shared several low and no cost techniques for puppet construction and led us through a series of simple material manipulations to create a character. He broke us into teams and



we were each tasked to come up with a performative narrative using the techniques of the day. Creativity poured out of the great collaborations between these educators as they built their stories and characters. The groups then performed their puppet show. It was such a vibrant way to collect and showcase all of this great creative energy.

Pat Cruz of Young Audiences and MAEA secretary helped to facilitate and extend discus-

*Gayle Danley and Michael Lamason's workshop made for an engaging morning with lots of hands on activities. Gayle's slam poetry and writing prompts were an exercise in releasing emotion and experience with a lot of laughter and tears. And Michael's puppet making workshop got us out of our seats and thinking collaboratively about performance. Together, they inspired a ton of new ideas for me to bring to my students!*

—Rachel Valsing  
Visual Arts Department Chair  
Lansdowne High School



sion helping to make connections and share resources connecting the day's activities to common core and literacy standards. Gayle and Michael were a seamless team and made pertinent and elegant connections between the creative process of each of their crafts, literacy and storytelling.

### **BEYOND THE SURFACE: AN EXPLORATION OF CLAY AND PRINT**

The second spring professional learning experience brought Shawna Pincus, a ceramic artist and member of the Towson University Art Education Faculty, to the Columbia Art Center in Howard County for her exploratory clay workshop. Participants explored the possibilities of the ceramic surface through alternative forms of printmaking in clay. Block printing, stamping, texture impressions, press molds and decals transfers were discussed and demonstrated throughout the session. Participants spent time during the workshop collaborating and creating personal ceramic artworks that

*“Great workshop that was very well done and informative. I came away with lots of new and exciting ideas to take back to the classroom. Shawna presented a lot of useful information and had wonderful clay process demonstrations that were very relevant and appropriate to today’s students”.*  
—MCPS Visual Arts Teacher

combined and utilized various ceramic print-making techniques presented.

Held at the Columbia Center for the Arts, the workshop connected a total of thirty-one educators from seven Maryland school districts. School Specialty also joined in on the fun to showcase some new sculptural products and donated some wonderful gift baskets that were given away to lucky workshop participants.

Keep your eyes peeled for future FALL professional learning opportunities offered by MAEA!



# MARYLAND ART EDUCATORS ROCK THE NAEA AWARDS



**Eleni Dykstra receiving her award from  
NAEA President, Dennis Inhulsen**



**Ryan Twentey with his Secondary Trophy**

## **LINDA POPP**

**A**s NAEA Eastern Region Vice President, one of my favorite duties was hosting the Eastern Region Awards Ceremony at the NAEA Conference. I am especially proud because Maryland art educators notoriously receive many of the awards. Other states are wondering if there's something in our water!

The fact is that Maryland has amazing art teachers who take their expertise and passion beyond their own classrooms. We also have

colleagues and supervisors who recognize the importance of celebrating the accomplishments of our art teachers and nominate them for awards. Then our MAEA Council is diligent about orchestrating and completing all of the required nomination packets and submitting them on time to NAEA. The MAEA Chairman for National Awards is Ashley Molfino.

Information about the NAEA Award process and Award criterion can be found on the website [www.naea-reston.org](http://www.naea-reston.org): select "Grants & Opportunities," and then "NAEA Awards."

Congratulations to our Maryland art educators who were recognized at the 2014 NAEA Convention in San Diego:



**Anne Manning, National Museum  
Education Art Educator**

*"I feel so honored to be recognized with the NAEA Art Museum Educator of the Year Award. I joined NAEA when I got my first permanent museum education position twenty years ago and haven't missed a convention since. I receive so much from the organization and its members—knowledge, inspiration, a shared sense of purpose, and a passion for art education. I feel blessed to be part of such a generous, joyful, and creative community of thinkers and practitioners."*

—Anne Manning

*"Effective leadership is the backbone to any organization and I am fortunate to have had predecessors who have built a solid foundation in the state of Maryland. Fostering passion, energy, and enthusiasm start with the leader and it has been my mission to do just that! I believe a leader is not only limited to the person in charge, but everyone in the group has a role and should be empowered to contribute to the growth of the organization."*

—Eleni Dykstra



**Eleni Dykstra, Marion Quin Dix  
Leadership Award**



**Debra Ambush, J. Eugene  
Grigsby Jr. Award**



**Ryan Twentey, Eastern Region  
Secondary Art Educator**



**Elisa Patterson, Maryland Art  
Educator**

Our students, parents, and communities truly benefit from such a remarkable team of art educators who share their artistic passion and expertise daily in Maryland schools, universities, centers, and museums. It is an honor to applaud your joyful work!

# MAEA RESEARCH DIVISION

## **SHYLA RAO**

Director

## **BENJAMIN TELLIE**

Assistant Director

The Maryland Art Education Association has launched a new Research Division. The goal of the Research Division is to provide a forum for art educators to share ideas, collaborate with each other, and engage with resources and opportunities for publishing and showcasing work. The Research Division strives to have art education research become a regular part of good teaching practice and come alive throughout our community. The Division will communicate with members and educators about research opportunities, conference events, and answer questions they may have.

### **WHY RESEARCH IN ART EDUCATION?**

What can research be and what capacities can research take on in art education? Does research have to take the form of a traditional published manuscript? Or, can research be art investigations in the classroom, a poem, or perhaps an illustration or monologue about a topic?

(Re)search, or to search again, provides a format for becoming a reflective practitioner

and learning from events that occur in our classrooms. Research can take many forms and can be a critical format for learning more about ourselves, our classroom environments, and our students' educational development. Research is important for our development as practitioners, moving the field of art and art education in new directions, and engaging with teaching and learning in new ways.

### **WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?**

We have recently launched the official website and blog of the Maryland Art Education Association Research Division: [www.researchmaryland.org](http://www.researchmaryland.org). We encourage members to use the website and blog as a resource for engaging with art and art education research, information about publishing opportunities, conference events, blog posts, and more. The Research Division website, managed by Benjamin Tellie, is updated with new information on a timely basis as well as new blog posts about research and updates about new events and conferences happening within the community.

The Research Division piloted its first research study group this spring, facilitated by Dr. Shyla Rao. The study group has been focused on assessment as creative process and is working with Demo Studio, founded

by MAEA members Rachel Valsing, Jesse Dortzbach, Sherri Fisher, and Jen McBrien, to host a new art exhibit by local and statewide art educators at D:Center, Baltimore this Fall 2014. Rachel Valsing, curator of the exhibit, provides a description of the exhibition below.

### HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

We urge members and practitioners to become involved as much as possible by submitting articles, writings, projects or ideas to post on our new research website. Check out our new share link: [www.researchmaryland.org/share/](http://www.researchmaryland.org/share/). We always look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or would like more information please contact us through our contact page on the Research

Division website: [www.researchmaryland.org/contact/](http://www.researchmaryland.org/contact/)

***Shyla Rao** is a co-director and instructor in the Masters of Arts in Teaching Program at Maryland Institute College of Art having taught courses in theory, methods, and practice. Shyla is the Director of the MAEA Research Division and serves on the executive council of MAEA.*

***Benjamin Tellie** is an art and design educator at Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School. He is also a gallery instructor for the high school seminar program at the National Gallery of Art. Benjamin is the Assistant Director of the MAEA Research Division and serves on the executive council of MAEA.*

## DEMO STUDIO:

Teaching as a Design Process



READ/ RESPOND/ SHARE

INVESTIGATE/ GENERATE IDEAS

MAKE ART/ WRITE

PRESENT/DISCUSS

### What happens when we approach our teaching practice with the disposition of artists and designers?

Through the lens of contemporary art and design, classrooms become installations, prototypes are art objects, demonstrations are performances, and our teaching strategies take on an experiential role. With the success of last year's exhibit, D:Center has invited Demo Studio to bring new work from the classroom to their gallery in the fall of 2014. In addition to meeting the aims of last year's program with insightful and engaging work that both reflects and responds to teaching art, the contributions of a newly formed study group will also provide a new platform for discussion and critical dialog. Thanks to a partnership with Dr. Shyla Rao and a group of teachers who are putting research to action, Demo Studio will include visual reflections and new designs for assessment.

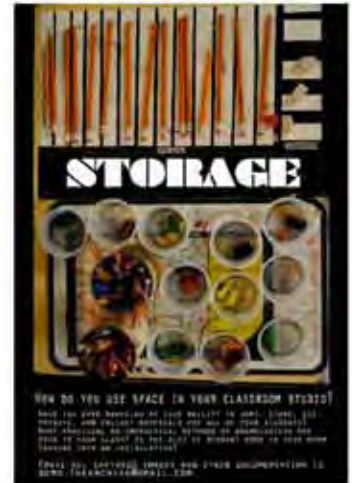
Follow [demostudio.wordpress.com](http://demostudio.wordpress.com) to see the evolution of the work. Be there for the opening at D:Center on August 20 at 5PM!

# demostudio

an archive of contemporary art and design in the classroom



In the spring of 2013 art teachers were invited to shift the focus of their personal expression from the studio to the school. Demo Studio: an exhibit of art and design from the classroom sought to bring the world of teaching art to the greater art world with a gallery show of demonstrations and visual response. In addition to the exhibit, teachers were invited to share art and design through images, diagrams, and observed phenomena based on a series of prompts. Submissions in the form of handouts, classroom photos, organizational charts, and class visuals were catalogued to form an archive of visual culture from the classroom on the blog: [demostudio.wordpress.com](http://demostudio.wordpress.com).



Allissandra Seelaus; *Things I Didn't Say*

Craig Llewellyn; *Classroom Installation*

Sherri Fisher; *Teacher -Student Dialog*

# “COMMON” ARTS EDUCATION

## **THERESA ALO, PH.D.**

Fine Arts Chair at North Point High School  
Charles County Public Schools

Some current researchers anchor their perspectives of art education by beginning with Horace Mann demanding that visual arts and music be included in the common schools in Massachusetts in the late 1800's. Mann's rationale was that visual arts and music was an aid to the curriculum and an overall enhancement to learning. This is seen as the first major entrance of arts into curricula. Another anchor used by current researchers is the positive correlation emphasized by educational reformer John Dewey between arts instruction and cognition, which guided curricular decisions beginning in the late 1800's and spanning through the 1900's (Darby & Catterall, 1994).

Prominent theorists and practitioners such as Eisner, Catterall, and Gardner have argued that the arts are integral to the education of the “whole child” (Eisner, 1994; Catterall, 1998; Gardner, 1999a). The arts are compatible with Gardner's (2006) nine intelligences, which include: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and existential, all stemming from artistic tendencies. Arts education appeals to the various intelligences

by providing students various deliveries of information that are attuned to diverse learning styles found in modern classrooms, allowing educators a way to identify differing strengths and weaknesses in their students.

Studies involving arts education have looked at its relationship to academic achievement, cognition, and motivation (Catterall & Darby, 1994). Other studies have identified similar findings describing effects of arts learning on general habits of mind and thinking dispositions (Horowitz & Dempsey, 2002). Yet other studies involve taking an idea, which are starting points for thought, discussion, reading, viewing, writing, and examining it from an artistic point of view to generate thematic starting points to help students connect the visual arts to ideas that exist in the school curriculum (Walling, 2006).

Wilhelm's (1995) study set out to see if academic achievement was affected by arts education and uncovered a correlation between reluctant readers and the use of visual arts to increase reading ability. Art here was seen as a motivator. Smolkin (1997) conducted a research study with fifth grade students who were observed making meaningful inferences from reading passages when incorporating drama techniques. The results of this study showed an increase in students' cognition. McMahon, Parks, and Rose

(2002) studied first grade students participating in the *Building Reading through Dance* program and discovered that students in the program improved significantly in all reading skills, resulting in improved academic achievement. These studies were successful in the goals they set out to attain, proving that arts education has a positive effect on academic achievement, cognition and motivation.

Podlozny (2000) engaged in another study involving reading comprehension, vocabulary

usage and writing quality of elementary students enrolled in drama instruction. Through the course of this study, students showed increased reading comprehension and engaged in more vocabulary usage. The writings that students were assigned after they were instructed in drama techniques showed improved writing quality. The results of this study showed improvement in all three areas measured.

Luftig (2000) found that students in an arts-enriched curriculum scored better on creative thinking, social and parental self-esteem, and arts appreciation when compared to students in a traditional curriculum. Moreover, the arts enriched program “yielded promising results in terms of academic achievement” (p. 225). Other research has highlighted the role of the visual arts, music, and drama in the development of self-regulation (Baum et al., 1997), in reading and reading comprehension, writing and verbal expression (Catterall, 1998), and social studies conceptual understanding (Aschbacher & Herman, 1991).

Vaughn and Winner (2000) conducted a voluntary survey of students who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). It revealed that students who took arts courses had higher math, verbal and overall SAT scores than students who do not take arts classes. The link between SAT scores and students who study the arts also revealed that these students were consistently higher academic achievers than students who did not study the arts. Moreover, there was evidence that students who took four years of arts courses had higher scores than those who took some art, but less than four years’ worth.

The studies reviewed above illustrate that students can be taught to search their minds



**Monique S.**  
**Fairland Middle School**  
**Montgomery County Public Schools**



for images and they can be guided through the process to select appropriate images that enhance learning and increase retention. The arts play an important function in human advancement, increasing the growth of cognitive, emotional, and psycho-motor pathways (Sousa, 2006). The arts are to be credited with characterizing aspects encountered in the world whereas most academic subjects are concerned with breaking it up into analytical pieces (Brown, 2001).

Students engaged in the arts have better habits of mind, intuition, and practical and logical modes of thought. All students have the potential to benefit from arts education and therefore should not be removed from arts classes to have remediation in areas in order to achieve higher test scores. In conclusion, curriculum experts should not expect proponents of the arts to defend its existence in terms of test scores. After all, public schools are not offering to cut competitive athletics from the budget because of low test scores!

## Resources

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# IMAGINE: A FESTIVE CELEBRATION OF WRITING AND ART

## **MEGARY SIGLER**

5th Grade and Middle School Art Teacher  
Roland Park Country School

Visual art and creative writing are alike in so many ways. They both allow us to express ourselves, create imaginary spaces, tell stories and explore what it means to be human. They naturally lend themselves to collaboration. Even some of the words we use in the two disciplines are the same. Rhythm, composition, contrast, emphasis, and theme are but a few.

Several years ago, my wonderful English department colleagues at Roland Park Country School, Julie Dufresne, Ellen Krich, and Keri-Sue Baker, and I developed an event entitled “Imagine: Where Art and Writing Can Take You.” With the support of our administration, it has become a tradition.

Each year in the spring, the RPCS Middle School gathers to celebrate these intertwining art forms. Responding to different prompts set forth by their English teachers or art teachers, students from each grade read their original writing to the entire audience. Between each grade’s readings, PowerPoint slides of student artwork are shown. Each student who takes art has a piece in the presentation. I play music during the slideshow, rocking the artwork



**Allie K.**  
Roland Park Country School

with African drums, Brazilian jazz, or French ballads, which lends an multicultural flair to the event.

Although student artwork is displayed year-round throughout the school, I believe that there is something especially empowering for students to see their own creations, larger than life, center-stage on the screen.

In addition, hearing student writers read their own work is exhilarating. It is thrilling to see a window into their worlds that otherwise would

remain hidden. I am always awed by their insightful, brave, funny and wise voices. Student writers seem elated and proud to be sharing their written words with their community.

And then we all head to the RPCS Athletic Complex lobby to have cookies.

When students take the great risk to show their authentic selves through writing and visual art, they deserve to be celebrated. Imagine is a festive, joyful way to let those selves shine.

.....

*A Fight for Freedom*

*By Taja W.*

*Roland Park Country School*

*Fighting for something we want*

*Fighting for something that needs to  
happen*

*Fighting for something*

*Fighting something that will never be  
right*

*Fighting a losing battle*

*Fighting against opinions*

*Fighting against our kind*

*Fighting against something that isn't  
fair*

*Fighting something that will never be  
equal*

*But yet, we're still fighting*

*Freedom is something we all wish*

*In a way we have it, but not the way we  
want*

*"Mom, can I go to the mall?"*

*"No, it's not safe!"*

*We pout, we get mad, we sneak out  
anyway*

*We get hurt, we suffer, trying to find out  
the one who was wrong,*

*The one who was right . . .*

*When we can't find them we wonder*

*If I had listened to the call, would I be  
with them right now, those who  
have died?*

*Freedom is something we all wish, but  
is it worth the sacrifice?*

# MUSINGS ON CREATIVITY

## **B.J. MCELDERRY**

Chair, Art Department  
Garrison Forest School

Ancient Greeks attributed the inspiration that precedes creativity to muses—beautiful women in diaphanous clothing, discreetly transmitting words to a writer, strokes to a painter, thoughts to a philosopher, and notes to a composer. References to muses bring to mind an amusing memory.

As the costumer for a production of Aristophanes' *The Birds*, I went to a rehearsal and took my toddler with me. Quietly, he played with his trucks while I fitted the off-stage actors. A few days afterward, I handed him a paper towel tube to make something; I had done this many times, but on this occasion, he politely replied, "My muse thanks you." Shocked, I thought I had misunderstood what he said, but later, he repeated the sentence. Knowing that children frequently mimic what they see and hear, mentally I replayed his recent encounters to discover when and where he had heard the expression. Eventually, I recalled the Poet's line in *The Birds*, spoken when he was handed a cloak. When next my son said, "My muse thanks you," I asked him, "Do you know what those words mean?" With a slight smile and an almost-two-year old's pronunciation, he answered,

"what you say when someone gives you something new." To my small child, mysteriously or indirectly, a muse was associated with gifts. I accepted the answer; after all, *gifts* of new ideas, words, melodies, images, and inventions were inherent in the Greek concept of a muse, along with the expectation that an artist could call on and count on a personal muse for inspiration.

My son's simple interpretation of muses set my mind wandering, thinking about their origins, reasons for being, and offspring. With some adaptations, personifications of inspiration persisted and played an active role in art history for many centuries. Add *um* to *muse* and you have a building for the arts, the sacred dwelling of muses. Etruscans modified the Greeks' lovely, inspiring companions to be winged figures with generative powers; later, Romans depicted the spiritual attendants with torches or lamps, equating inspiration to enlightenment. Called *genii*, the Roman figures birthed the concept of creative *geniuses*, which informed the representation of divine guardian angels, and led to images of sparks and light bulbs as signs of inspiration.

Is creativity the result of an epiphany or a "eureka" moment? Sometimes, creativity does seem to be an instantaneous and spontaneous revelation. Does that mean that

non-illuminating times are dull or dormant? Not at all. The plateaus between creations are germination periods. That's when you stretch canvases, wedge clay, grind ink . . . do those seemingly mindless tasks that allow the images and experiences stored in your mind's reserve to materialize, gain strength, and surface. Seeking to identify pathways to creativity, scientists have mined, scanned, and analyzed human brains, demystifying much about the creative process. What came to a creator in a "flash" likely evolved from some combination of stimuli, curiosity, adapt-

ability, observation, research, experimentation, the four P's—patience, perseverance, positive thinking, problem-solving—receptivity, connectivity, reflection, and solitude. All that to yield an "aha" moment!

How do you represent that compilation? As a graceful muse? A light-bearing spirit? A tangle of firing synapses? Not if living in ancient China when artists derived inspiration from monumental mountains, powerful waterfalls, and transitory mists. An old Chinese saying advises would-be artists "to read 10,000 books and walk 10,000 miles," acknowledging the necessity for extensive study and experience. (The same advice was given to poets, teachers, and leaders.) From this perspective, the Greeks' reliance on muses appears to eliminate much of the intellectual and physical work the Chinese adage and modern science recognize as part of the creative process. The Greeks took a different view of the process. Personifying or giving inspiration an idealized human form mirrored Greek and Roman artists' efforts to make the invisible visible. Visualizing inspiration helps us relate to what is difficult to codify, explain, quantify, package or contain—creativity.

Launched by my first years of motherhood, my musings conclude with a simple observation: whether imagined as muses, mists, or chemical reactions, inspiration is fed by looking, listening, and other sensory experiences and summoned by childhood wonder.

P.S. When inspiration sets you on a creative journey, thank her or him or it!



**Philippe A.  
DuVal High School  
Prince George's County Public Schools**

# WALKING THE LABYRINTH: COMMUNITY ARTS AS A HEALING PRACTICE



## **ELISABETH GAMBINO**

Art Teacher

Academy of College and Career Exploration

## **H**OW DOES THE ART CLASSROOM ENGAGE IN REFLECTIVE PRACTICES IN A GROUP CONTEXT?

Constructing a labyrinth with your students marries a number of seemingly divergent practices, including contemporary art education, walking meditation, landscape architecture, mosaics, depth psychology, and art therapy. As an inner-city art teacher working with at-risk youth, I wanted to incorporate character education and

remediation into a large scale art project. In the multi-year Labyrinth Project, students create lasting landscape art that also teaches mindfulness and conflict resolution.

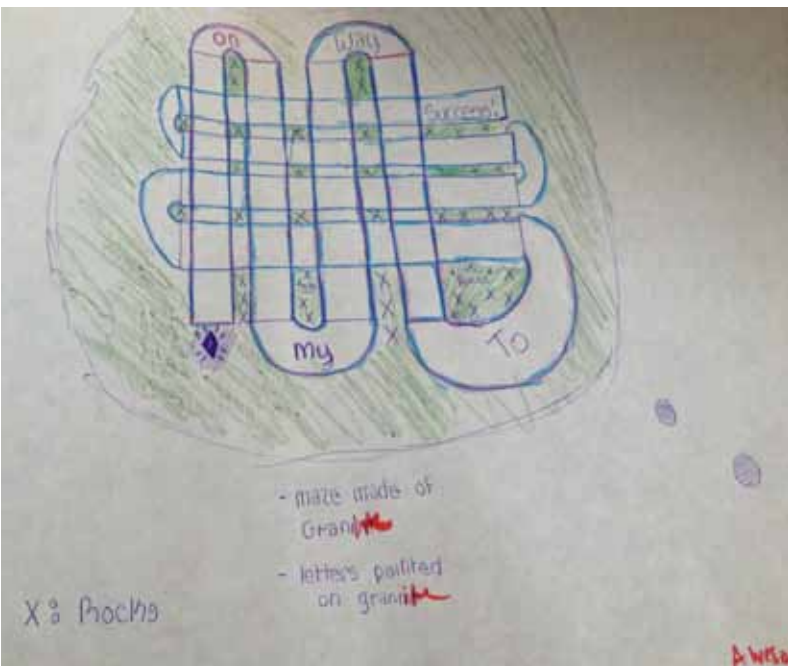
I came to the Academy of College and Career Exploration (ACCE) with an MFA in Illustration and an abiding interest in public art projects. I've completed a number of intercultural projects, including study with the Japan Fulbright Memorial Foundation and training as an Earthwatch Fellow in Kenya. ACCE is a free, public school of choice in Baltimore city, recently recognized as a Maryland Green School. The population is 98% African American and 88% participate in the FARMS program. The school was founded by a board of operators including the Mayor's Office of Employment Development. Our goal is to prepare students for 21st century career and educational goals.

Some of us are familiar with the Greek legend of the labyrinth, which King Minos built beneath Crete to contain the man-eating Minotaur. Fewer of us are familiar with the

adoption of labyrinths in Christian cathedrals as a walking meditation for monks and pilgrims. Some cathedrals such as Chartres (near Paris) have labyrinths inlaid in the apse floor; others, such as the cathedral at Stanford University, use quilted fabric labyrinths that roll up easily for storage. Eastern traditions use mandalas, which are similar radial images leading to a center, but are usually two dimensional images as opposed to structures. These are used similarly for meditation, reflection, and union with a god.

**HOW CAN WE MAKE THIS TRADITION, ROOTED IN ANCIENT CULTURES, CONTEMPORARY AND RELEVANT?**

Amongst contemporary artists, Ernesto Pujol, a former cloistered monk, stands out for his work in "social choreography," where groups of people hold a contemplative presence, holding this reflective space for the viewer. Robert Smithson, of Spiral Jetty fame, created changes to the landscape that interact



with the environment over time, and utilize a spiraling form to concentrate attention as well as tide pools. Smithson believed that changing our local landscape can change the way we think, particularly if we engage with that landscape on a daily basis. I orchestrated the Labyrinth Project around the central idea that students would be able to work with this large scale earthworks project while making personal connections through journals. The journals would ONLY be seen by the teacher and would NOT be shared with class members or be made public without express permission.

Initial prompts included identifying a personal problem, which could include something internal or a conflict with others. Students then learned to draw a labyrinth and mapped their personal problem to their labyrinth design. The problems included the death of a sibling, dealing with a personal temper, or graduating high school and achieving acceptance to a college program. It was my hope that teaching students reflective practice one-on-one would assist them to work through some of these processes on an individual basis, resulting in an increased sense of personal responsibility, a decrease in fights, and an ability to provide self-healing from the emotional wounds of adolescence, which are increased by our students' socioeconomic disadvantages.

Students then created minotaurs out of dried clay, which represented their problems, and designed performative processes to deal with the metaphorical figures, such as destroying or honoring the figures in the center of the labyrinth.

Once the symbolic action was planned, I prompted students to plan steps to resolve the outside problem or address resultant emotions including grief, anger and frustrations. If you are familiar with Sand Tray therapy, this use of a simulacrum to represent a problem is a

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*“[T]eaching students reflective practice one-on-one . . . provide[s] self-healing from the emotional wounds of adolescence. . .”*  
.....

standard Depth therapy approach based on Carl Jung's work. Depth psychology emphasizes delving into the psyche to correct dysfunctional thoughts and behaviors, but also to pursue ideals of social justice and equality for communities. We see this philosophy in practices such as Theater of the Oppressed. In the labyrinth project, students were enabled as creators of the problem, instead of selecting from a pre-designed group of commercially produced figures. The students took more ownership of their issues through the symbolic action of creation.

#### **HOW DID WE ACTUALLY BUILD IT?**

We began with a design charrette, in which students created more complex versions of their designs for the labyrinth, and through a series of anonymous votes, selected their favorites. Students mapped out the top three designs using ropes on measured areas of



asphalt. Measurement processes were applied as students laid out paving stones to make the labyrinth path and began to dig them into the soil. The process was difficult in the May heat. Those uninterested in digging worked as observational journalists, and the best articles were submitted to a local newsletter.

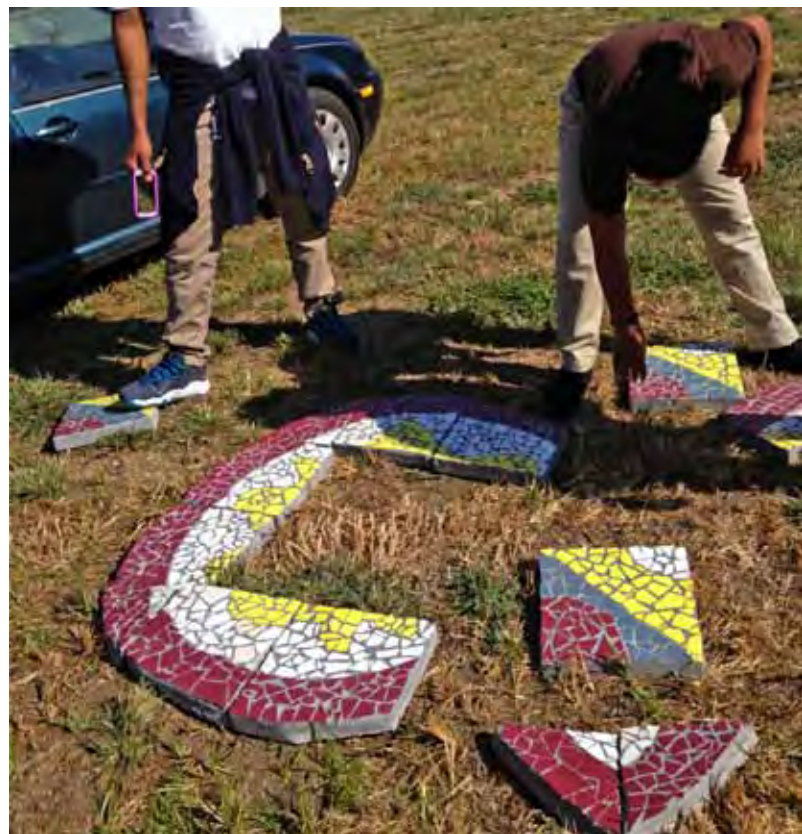
Walking the labyrinth was perhaps the most important part of the lesson. Students were directed on basic tenets of walking meditation: “At the entrance of the labyrinth, focus on your intention, the problem that has brought you to the labyrinth. Maintain this focus and **begin walking**. Walk at a relaxed, fairly slow but normal pace. Pay attention to the sensations in your body as you walk. Allow the movement to keep you grounded in your reflection on your guiding question or problem.” The center of the labyrinth was used for a moment of pause and reflection, and after a quiet walk out, students journalled their experiences.

In our second year of the project, I faced a new group of students. We reviewed the concept of the labyrinth, and focused on landscape architecture, analyzing models such as Longwood Gardens (in PA) and Rockefeller Center to inspire designs for the space. Students created unique landscape designs for the space around the labyrinth in order to create a permanent park to frame it. We worked with our landscape architect to plan the purchase of new plants, and interns from the Maryland Institute College of Art to plan construction for surrounding benches.

Contemplative meditation in many ways runs counter to our cultural traditions of constant distraction! The center of the labyrinth is traditionally considered an area to pause and reflect. We decided to install a mandala as

a visual aid to meditation. After studying the cultural history and designs that use radial symmetry, we worked with local artist Lori Goodman to create a mosaic mandala centerpiece for our labyrinth. Mosaics have a rich position in public art traditions, from Gaudi’s architecture and parks in Barcelona, to Baltimore’s Visionary Art museum.

Where will the project go in the future? We are in the process of installing Japanese hollies every few feet which will create a green fence in between the labyrinth stones—a much easier solution than digging into the substrate and placing more stones. In their landscape architecture plans, students included plans for “reflection benches” installed around the edges of the labyrinth. We hope to continue to build up the space so it is more often utilized by other classes.



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The labyrinth project has been a great tool to stretch my teaching beyond traditional, technique-based classroom art education. We moved through comparative art history, walking meditation, landscape architecture, personal journaling, and more toward the context of reflective social art making. We increased students' personal connections to, and investments in, our campus, increased their ability to reflect on and plan solutions to personal challenges, and allowed them to create personal connections to art. It is my hope that you will be inspired to infuse some of these elements into your curriculum as well.

See below an overview of the project and some of the resources I consulted:

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

For this project, we incorporated character education and remediation into a large scale art lesson. We also integrated sustainable building modalities to create a large scale, lasting art work that teaches mindfulness and conflict resolution as well as landscape architecture. Students learned about the cultural history of the labyrinth from both an eastern and a western perspective. Practices that influenced this work included contemporary art education, walking meditation, landscape architecture, mosaics, depth psychology, and art therapy. The wellspring for this work were the guiding questions:

- How does the art classroom engage in reflective practices in a group context?
- How can I build this into my role as an inner-city art teacher working with at-risk youth in a public school setting?

### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 1) Introduce cultural history and practices
- 2) Practice labyrinth drawing skills with a guided drill
- 3) Have students map a personal problem to the guided drill
- 4) Students now use criteria set by the site/school to design a more complex labyrinth for the charrette to choose the final design for the project
- 5) Students learn the cultural history of the minotaur and create a clay model of their minotaur/homunculus for their own walk
- 6) Students plan the action they will take with their homunculus and plan their labyrinth walk
- 7) Students practice walks and practice construction in teams using rope/tape
- 8) Mosaic building/technique instruction
- 9) Final installation

### **LABYRINTH RESOURCES**

#### **Websites**

How to create a foldable short form journal:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGPIQygK7VQ>
- <http://therecipebunny.blogspot.com/2012/03/upcycled-book-journal.html>

There are many different models for hollowing a book, creating your own pages and signatures, and binding them:

- <http://ernestopujol.org>
- <http://robertsmithson.com>
- <https://labyrinthsociety.org/resources>
- <http://www.relax4life.com/finger-labyrinths.html>

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Finger labyrinths can be built or purchased. Be sure to emphasize the meditative quality if using these sensory resources. Playskool makes ball bearing labyrinth games.

- <http://www.wikihow.com/Draw-a-Labyrinth>
- <http://labyrinthsociety.org/make-a-labyrinth>

Tape is a great solution if you have a large indoor space and don't have a lot of money/time for building supplies. Also, many groups including churches create labyrinths painted on floor cloths or sewn into quilts, making them easy to store and to transport

### **Books**

Artress, Lauren. *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as Spiritual Practice* (with great activities) AND *The Sacred Path Companion: A Guide to Walking the Labyrinth to Heal and Transform*.

Curry, Helen. *The Way of the Labyrinth: A Powerful Meditation for Everyday Life*.

Draper, Brian. *Labyrinth: Illuminating the Inner Path*.

Ferre, Robert D. *Church Labyrinths: Questions and answers regarding the history, relevance, and use of labyrinths in churches*.

Mariotti, Giovanni, Biondetti, Ricci and Eco. *Labyrinths: The Art of the Maze*.

Matthews, W.H. *Mazes and Labyrinths: Their History and Development (Dover Children's Activity Books)*. Most thorough history but a bit dry.

Mosse, Kate. *Labyrinth*.

Saward, Jeff. *Magical Paths: Labyrinths & Mazes in the 21st Century*.

Schick, Aliyah. *Labyrinths: Meditative Coloring Book 5: Adult Coloring for relaxation, stress reduction, meditation, spiritual connection, prayer, centering, healing, . . . into your deep true self; for ages 9-109*.

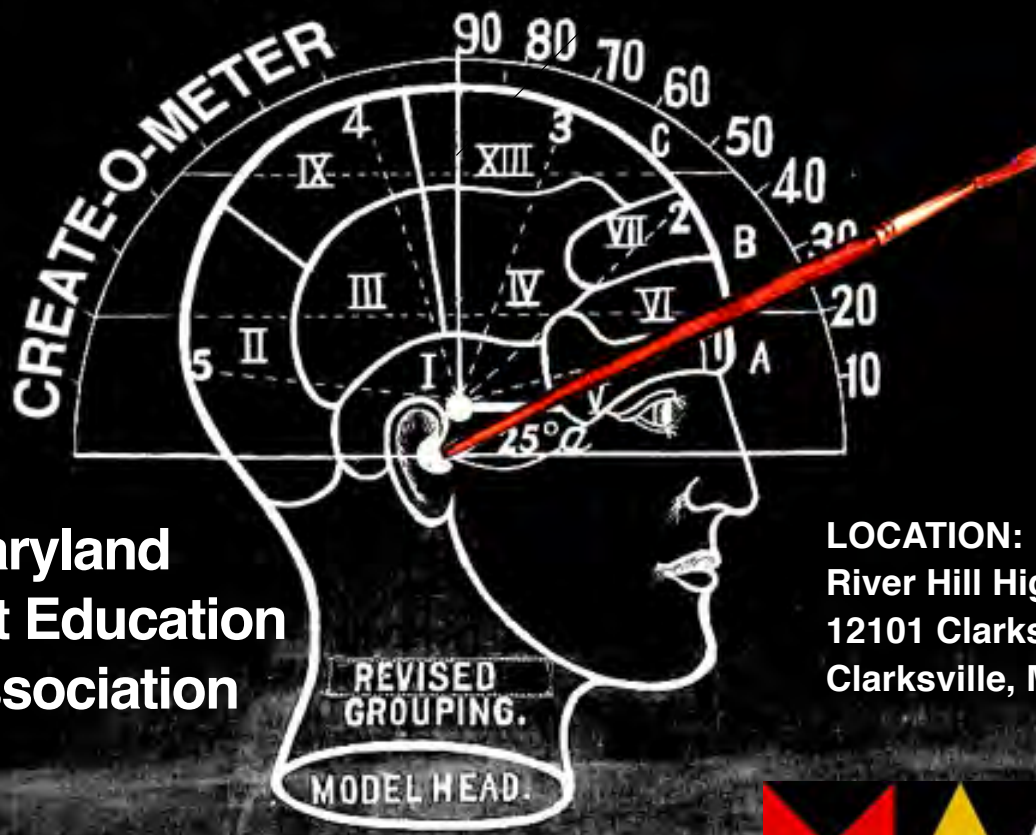
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**CREATIVITY TRANSFORMING PRACTICE**



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