

2008 CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION THESIS PRESENTATIONS

Coming Full Circle: Self-exploration through Art ~ Chelsey Bilka

This project explores whether art supports self-exploration and self-inquiry within a five-week-long educational workshop setting. Using contemplative art techniques, six adult participants explored themselves in relation to self, in relation to community, in relation to thoughts and beliefs, and ultimately in relation to change and transformation. The participants agreed to contemplate guiding questions focused on these themes as they engaged in activities such as Touch Drawing, Free-writing, movement, mask-making, Inquiry and mandala-making. Participants had the opportunity to process their experiences within the workshop as well as question their ideas about identity in discussion groups following each workshop. Some central themes that surfaced for the participants within this framework were their ideas about “pure” expression, authenticity, community versus individual learning, the use of words versus art, and the value of being witnessed within an educational environment.

A Journey of Illumination: The five colors of classroom dynamics ~ Katie Muleh

The focus of this piece is the journey from student to teacher. Through interview, movement, and research the new teacher connects to the five Buddha families, a Tibetan Buddhist paradigm. The five Buddha families provide a tool for the teacher to understand classroom dynamics. The goal of this work is to refine and to validate the five Buddha family “model” in Contemplative Education.

We are the Sound: Using Rhythm and Music to Enhance Learning and Classroom Atmosphere

~ Jason Griffith

This paper and its research examine the use of music to enhance learning, classroom atmosphere, and creativity through three specific methods within an 8th Grade English classroom. Students examined rhythm by participating in drum circles and journaling about the experience; students used creative writing to observe emotion and connection as they listened to a movement from a Henryk Gorecki symphony; and music was played during study halls, transition times, and various class activities to observe effects. Evaluation came from student work and written response produced during the activities as well as the observations and reflection of the author. Interviews with experts in music and education and the observations of several of the author’s colleagues were also considered. The research finds that student interaction with music provides inspired writing, increased awareness of self and community, and a breakdown of student “cocoon” or typical adolescent defense mechanisms.

Teaching Mindfulness Through Touch: The Benefits of ‘Peaceful Touch’ in Early Childhood Education

~ Linda Derrick

Peaceful Touch is a professional development training for Early Childhood Education professionals. I worked with the University of Connecticut ECE faculty, lab school administrators and teachers, student teachers, and some of the parents and children. This 360 degree perspective has generated abundant reflective data about how this work affects the individuals specifically and the community in general. In a milieu of late capitalistic values, overemphasis on cognitive learning that is trickling down into pre-school curriculum, moral panic and misguided attempts to protect children from sexual abuse, a trend toward no-touch policies has become prevalent in ECE. The Peaceful Touch training serves to raise awareness about the effects and benefits of nurturing touch and supports professionals to develop their sensitivity and capability to teach about healthy, nourishing touch with children, effectively and safely. When a person is centered and awake in their body, there is more natural openness, curiosity and engagement to the world. This is foundational for a contemplative approach to education.

OVERVIEW OF PAPERS SUBMITTED, 2003–08

STUDENT NAME AND TITLE OF THESIS

- Asrael, Dale (2008): *The Love of Wisdom Puts You on the Spot: The Warrior Exchange as Contemplative Pedagogy*
- Auble, Devin (2003): *Happiness in Teaching*
- Bates, Melanie (2005): *Teacher's Discipline: Playful Mind*
- Billka, Chelsey (2008): *Coming Full Circle: Exploring Self Through Contemplative Art*
- Blumberg, Michele (2003): *The Spiral Journey to Deep Learning*
- Corbin, Jane Andrews (2003): *Heightened Awareness of One's Physical Senses and Its Impact on the Presence of Teachers and Students in the Classroom*
- Derick, Linda (2008): *Teaching Mindfulness Through Touch: The Benefits of 'Peaceful Touch' in Early Childhood Education*
- Dochery, Sharon Barr (2005): *Authentic Performance: Finding Emotional Depth in the Middle School Choir Classroom*
- Doyle, Katie (2003): *Eighth Grade as a Rite of Passage: A Journey of Transformation*
- Eaton, Meredith (2006): *Coming Home: Educators as Contemplative Practitioners*
- Egart, Katie (2007): *Spirited Journeys: Intimacy with Experience (A College Internship Program)*
- Fernandez-Fraser, Rosa (2005): *The Gong in the Classroom: A Practice in Compassionate Teaching*
- Foster, Marcie (2004): *The Wizard of Oz Workshop for Teachers: An Exploration of the Three Realms Model*
- Goldstein, Marin (2004): *Cultivating a Sense of Sacredness: Mindfulness, Awareness, and Relationship in Outdoor Education*
- Griffith, Jason (2008) : *We Are the Sound : Using Rhythm and Music to Enhance Learning and Classroom Atmosphere*
- Gruener, Kasandra (2006): *Circle Upon Circle ... Drawing Out Wholeness with Dance in Education*
- Hooley, Gene (2007): *Karma Family Wisdom in Contemplative Administration*
- Ingoglia, Dan (2006): *Transcending the Educational Box: How Contemplative Practices Complement Critical Thinking*
- Kaufman, Jackie (2007): *A Contemplative Approach to Alternative Education*
- Kicza, Anmari (2003): *Artist, Learner, Teacher*
- Lanza, Mary (2005): *The Art of Teacher Leadership: The Five Wisdom Energies Mandala Project*
- Lynch, Michal (2005): *Disposing of the Map: Education to Lead Us Out of the 'Matrix'*
- Mithcell, Patrick (2007): *Sound Waves, Noise, and Silence: Developing Sonic Awareness in the Preschool*
- Muleh, Katre (2008): *Illuminating Colors: An Ethnographic Approach to Understanding Classroom Dynamics Using the Five Buddha Families*
- Myers, Sarah Catherine (2005): *Nutritional Dissonance: Increasing awareness about the effects of nutrition through contemplative practices in the classroom*
- Ogawa, Anne (2007): *Community Building in an Adolescent Language Classroom in France*
- Perry, Jeanine Marie (2003): *A Study of Writing as a Means to Personal Growth in High School*
- Pett, Kristen L. (2006): *Experiencing Art as Contemplative Practice*
- Ramirez-Fiol, Lidian (2004): *Compassionate Teaching Practice and Creativity as a Means to Evaluate Student Learning*
- Stewart, Allen (2004): *Teaching in the Moment: A Teacher's Journey*
- Suri, Aikta (2005): *The Journey of a Contemplative Teacher: An Evolution Toward Oneness*
- Vino, Libby (2006): *Cosmic Math: Finding Meaning, Significance, and Connection in Mathematics*