Let's address low visual arts self-efficacy

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Abstract
Visual arts pedagogy and the place of visual arts in the curriculum are determined by the collision of teachers’ visual arts self-efficacy beliefs, pedagogical beliefs about children’s learning processes and visual arts content knowledge.

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Let’s address low visual arts self-efficacy

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VISUAL arts pedagogy and the place of visual arts in the curriculum are determined by the collision of teachers’ visual arts self-efficacy beliefs, pedagogical beliefs about children’s learning processes and visual arts content knowledge. Recent research has found that educators with limited visual arts knowledge, developmental limiting beliefs about children’s capacity for visual arts learning and low personal visual arts self-efficacy were more likely to abdicate the role of planning for and teaching art to a colleague they consider more artistically or creative. They mistakenly position artistic ability as a naturally developing skill and not compromised or even permanently strengthened or weakened by experience. Teachers who carelessly place criticism forever dammed your visual arts self-confidence may thus unintentionally compromise the visual arts learning and appreciation of students and so compromise the very context in which we aim to nurture and educate the next generation of holistic thinkers, communicators and problem solvers we must value, model and teach.

The role of planning for and teaching art to a colleague they consider more artistically or creative is ironic that while most teachers readily position the belief that artistic and cultural experiences are important for children, many of these same teachers concurrently state that they are not personally artistic or creative. It is ironic that while most teachers readily position the belief that artistic and cultural experiences are important for children, many of these same teachers concurrently state that they are not personally artistic or creative. They mistakenly position artistic ability as a somehow naturally developing skill that few people are lucky enough to acquire. Perhaps such beliefs contribute to teachers lacking confidence in their own visual arts knowledge and capacity to teach visual arts skills? After all, if visual arts abilities supposedly develop by chance, perhaps the abdication of intentional teaching is more easily excused.

Low visual arts self-efficacy beliefs often stem from childhood and schooling experiences. Perhaps you recall only doing art as a smorgasbord of production lines, templates on Friday afternoons? Or, perhaps like many adults, you can vividly recall the moment when a carelessly placed criticism forever damaged your visual arts self-confidence? John Dewey identified the power of “collaborative learning,” where the development of future attitudes and desires for learning are profoundly strengthened or weakened by experience. He writes that if the desire for learning is compromised, “The pupil is actually robbed of those innate capacities which otherwise would enable him to cope with the circumstances that he meets in the course of his life.”

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31) states that children of all ages have the right to participate in the cultural and artistic life. If we truly believe that the development of future attitudes and desires for learning are profoundly strengthened or weakened by experience, we must value, model and teach visual arts learning and expression. To support personal and pedagogical reflection, teachers might consider the following questions:

• Do I value the visual arts in my teaching and curriculum planning?
• Are visual arts learning experiences integrated across the curriculum as a tool by which children are supported to explore, make meaning and express ideas?
• Are one-off arts and crafts activities only scheduled once a week as a therapeutic and fun activity to give children a break from the classroom or by the mistaken belief that visual arts learning is less academic or important than learning in other domains.

It is therefore most important that teachers examine their own visual arts self-efficacy and appreciate that their personal visual arts experiences, attitudes and consequential pedagogical choices will in turn influence their students’ visual arts learning, attitudes and confidence. To support personal and pedagogical reflection, teachers might consider the following questions:

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