

Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning (JUAL):

Special Issue on the Arts

John Vitale

Foreword

As an educator who has always embraced and championed alternative methods of learning in the classroom, it has been a sincere pleasure editing this special issue of JUAL (Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning). Kudos to Dr. Carlo Ricci (founder and principal editor of JUAL) for providing me with such a wonderful opportunity!

When it comes to alternative methods of pedagogy, the arts have always figured centrally. Creativity, imagination, innovation, and ingenuity are just a few of the words that come to mind when I think about the inherent value of not just teaching about the arts, but also using art-based approaches as a tool for general teaching. In this special issue of JUAL, we have many interesting thoughts and perspectives from scholars of diverse backgrounds.

Project of Heart: Art Installation and Alternative Settings Placement is a self-study between an assistant professor (Katie Tremblay, Trent University) and a Bachelor of Education teacher candidate (McKenna Jackson, Trent university) as they curated an arts-based installation focusing on Truth and Reconciliation and the legacy of Residential Schools at an Ontario University School of Education. The project involved the creation of artifacts that represented the candidates' learning and commitment to reconciliation. Findings include themes of pedagogy, problem solving, and personal growth, indicating that the exploration of arts-based creation methods for teaching about reconciliation, as well as alternative teaching placements and mentorship, are an important aspect of teaching and learning.

The Indigenous theme continues with *Akinoomaage Manidoo-giizis: Learning on the land from the land, the land as teacher in the 13th Moon (Spirit Moon)* by Jonathan Pitt (Nipissing University), who provides a creative narrative of an encounter during the Spirit Moon. Pitt describes *Akinoomaage*, the Anishinabek philosophy of land as teacher during the Spirit Moon, and discusses how learning from the land is a worldview often not valued in the mainstream schooling system. Moreover, he affirms how Art lies at the very core of the Anishinabek Nation.

Digital Stories: Using an Arts-Based Approach for Social Justice Learning by Christine Cho and Julie Corkett (Nipissing University) explores the use of an arts-based assignment, the creation of a digital story, in a mandatory Diversity and Inclusion course for Bachelor of Education students. Specifically, this article explores the rationale for using experiential learning to develop students' social justice self-efficacy to counter dysconsciousness and outlines the process that they implemented to scaffold the students' creation of their digital stories. Through the creative, interactive, and reflective process of an art-based assignment, teacher candidates became cognitively, somatically, and emotionally absorbed in a process that encourages critical awareness and, ultimately, transformation.

The experiential learning theme continues with *Teachers' Reflections on Student Learning in a Music Composition Project* by Bernie Andrews (University of Ottawa). Specifically, this article focuses on teachers' reflections on the students' learning through their participation in "Sound Connections: Composing Educational Music," a multi-year, multi-site research project in which professional composers composed new music for young musicians. Andrews found that creative work and musical learning included experimental and improvisational experiences (among many others), which have an important role to play in

alternative learning strategies in the classroom, such as self, peer, and experiential learning paradigms, which are hallmarks of unschooling and alternative learning.

Sadly, I received an email last November (2023) that Dr. Bernie Andrews had suddenly passed away. I had known Dr. Andrews as a music education colleague for 15 years, and I had the opportunity to work with him on several occasions. I encountered and interacted with Dr. Andrews on numerous occasions, particularly at the annual CSSE conference (Arts & Learning Sig). I also had an opportunity to have a chapter published in Dr. Andrew's two volume book *Perspectives on Arts Education Research in Canada* by Brill Publications in 2020. In that same year, I also reviewed his book *Working Together: A Case Study of a National Arts Education Partnership* in the *Canadian Music Educator's Journal*. Dr. Andrews played a pivotal role in music education across Canada and beyond, and I am deeply saddened by his passing. I am fortunate and blessed to have the opportunity to publish one of his last works. He will be dearly missed as both a friend and colleague.

John L. Vitale

Nipissing University