

# International Journal of Education & the Arts

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<http://www.ijea.org/>

ISSN 1529-8094

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Volume 12 Special Issue 1.1

June 30, 2011

## *Arts & Learning Research Journal Special Issue*

### Introduction to the Special Issue

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University of South Carolina

*In the spring of the school year, the high school and first-grade students came together for a collaborative, multi-age tile mosaic art project. Three times a week students from two first-grade classes would travel to the high school to work with a high school mentor in creating tile mosaic pieces. Those pieces would be brought together on the wall of the elementary school at the end of the year. Watching those students come together in the shared art experience served to remind me of the real treasure that teaching and learning can be. When school communities risk constructing learning that is outside the traditional organizational pattern, then they “risk” having a place where learning is authentic, and caring for each other becomes real. It takes courage on the part of the student, the teacher, and the principal to risk this type of experience.*

I wrote these lines in 2003 as an introduction to a leadership publication in which notions of collaboration, empathy, research, and practice were highlighted. In many ways, these same characteristics represent our Arts and Learning SIG. We have an eclectic membership in terms of formal training and experiences but we enjoy a shared commitment to the cultivation of the arts and learning. We work together offering our different skills to a synergistic outcome. We are present to each other’s viewpoints and we value those different perspectives. And, we aggressively engage in research that informs the body of knowledge as well as the practice of art production and meaning-making.

I suspect that no one has profited more from membership in this SIG than I. Some six years ago I came under the careful tutelage of Sally Gradle, professor at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, who was then Program Chair and she taught me much about the SIG community and about producing a robust agenda for the annual AERA meeting. These past two years Robin Mello, professor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, has once again created remarkable and engaging agendas for the AERA meetings. Out of each of these AERA meetings the Arts and Learning SIG has produced the highly respected, peer-reviewed research publication, *Arts and Learning Research Journal*. Having an outlet for publication of AERA presentations has always remained an important commitment of the SIG.

This year we have undertaken an exciting initiative that will make our research available to an ever expanding readership. With guidance from professors Liora Bresler from the University of Illinois Urbana/Champaign, Margaret Macintyre Latta of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, and Christine Thompson from The Pennsylvania State University, we are for the first time publishing in a special edition of *the International Journal of Education & the Arts*. Sally Gradle has taken on the important work of editing this publication and I once again am grateful to her.

I am convinced that next year's publication will be exciting as well as we draw on the important research presented at AERA 2011, New Orleans. Robin Mello, Program Chair, and Kimberly Powell, Assistant Program Chair from The Pennsylvania State University, have crafted 12 sessions for this year's meeting. Those titles are listed below:

1. (Re)positioning Learning Through Creative Medias, Literacies, and Modalities
2. Artist-Teachers and Teacher-Researchers: Evolution of Professional Identities Through Arts Instruction
3. Arts and Learning SIG Business Meeting and Guest Speaker Dr. Liora Besler
4. Assessing Achievement, Access, and Equality in Arts-in-Education
5. Both In and Out of the Game: Research With Young Children in Classroom Contexts
6. Community Arts: Social Engagement Inside and Outside School
7. Creative, Cultural, and Critical Pedagogies for Engagement in the Arts
8. Imagining to Learn: Arts Integration and Impact on Content Knowledge
9. Intersection of Pedagogy and Practice In and Through the Arts
10. New Perspectives on the Arts and Liberal Arts
11. Praxis and Perception: Teaching and Learning Music, Art, and Virtual Reality
12. The Critical Body: Learning Through Dancing

In closing let me say how very proud I am to have worked with this SIG and for having made such important friendships among colleagues. Robin Mello will be the Chair of the SIG and

Kimberly Powell will be Program Chair. Jacob Mishook will continue his important work managing our finances. Indeed, our leadership will be strong. And, if we are a little lucky then maybe David Betts will continue the mighty work to keep our SIG on the web (<http://www.uacoe.arizona.edu/ALSIG/>). Finally, Christine Thompson will make it possible for AERA presentations to be published in the premier publication for matters dealing with arts and learning. And, Sally Gradle will continue to receive my pleas for assistance, as six years of dependency is a hard habit to break.

Enjoy this publication. I look forward to seeing you at the next AERA meeting and to hearing about your important research. And, I am honored to have served you in the Arts and Learning SIG for the past six years.

Sincerely,

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