

Editorial: Connecting through Creative Collaboration

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This issue of IJLLAE is centered around the theme of *relationship building* through art education. Three questions were suggested for authors to consider: *In what ways does collaborative art making build rapport and relationship between participants? How can art foster empathy among participants with differing socio-political agendas/perspectives? And, how can art build sustainable relationships?* With this second issue we wanted to provide a framework to guide authors but be flexible enough for them to interpret the theme from a variety of viewpoints. The articles published present research with diverse participant populations in school, museum, and community settings and a range of educational approaches.

We open with a visual essay written by an intergenerational collaborative of art educators, McComb, Capling, DeMint, Miller, and Montero, who formed a professional learning community to create their own professional development activities addressing the needs and interests of k-16 art educators in their region. They meet to share knowledge, make art, and design

innovative curriculum, further illustrating how intergenerational professional relationships improve student learning outcomes while building meaningful collaborative relationships.

Liz Langdon examines relationship building through the lens of intergenerational mentor/mentee interactions, whereby mentoring is a form of collaborative personal and professional development. Langdon illustrates these ideas through the narrative of a mid-career art educator and the relationship she developed with an older adult artist as part of an action research project. The narrative is told through life history interview.

In *Building relationships: Art making and empty bowls*, Susan Whiteland questions how collaborative art making can foster relationship building for all stakeholders. Using a project-based learning framework Whiteland and her art education students researched food insecurity with middle school students in a STEAM program as a means of meeting a community need.

Angela La Porte's article, *Inverse inclusion: Transforming dispositions of disability and inclusion*, outlines new research she is conducting through a service-learning course with studio art students, preservice art education students and adult members of the community with special needs; an area little researched in our field. The goal is to transform preservice teachers' meaning perspectives about adults with special needs, helping them recognize ableism and dismantle ableist stereotypes. By inviting adult community members with special needs to collaborate with her students, Angela provided them with opportunities to exercise *inverse inclusion*, an approach that allows for students to rotate through a variety of roles: student, teacher, teacher's assistant, and observer to recognize ableism and its debilitating effects on community members and peers with special needs.

Co-authors Eli Burke and Carissa DiCindio describe an intergenerational museum art education program, *Stay Gold*, designed to build relationships between LGBTQIA+ youth and older adults through collaborative art making, story sharing, and conversations about art to combat feelings of loneliness, isolation, and disconnection. Through *Stay Gold*, participants were encouraged to consider their feelings of disconnection from the world, how they view their place in the world, and develop a sense of community with other members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

This issue closes with David Reuel Romero's article on the Tucson Museum of Art's *Memories in the Making* (MIM) program for persons with dementia and their care providers. With an ever-growing ageing population, increasing numbers of people are suffering from brain injuries. The MIM program offers gallery tours and art making activities led by docents with dementia training, unique to MIM. Romero's research involved conducting follow-up interviews with care providers to determine whether or not participation in the MIM program helped them reconnect with their family members suffering from dementia and network with other care providers experiencing similar circumstances.

The research stories told here all speak to how relationship building through collaborative art making and dialogic discourse forges supportive connections, decreases feelings of isolation, and provides opportunities for personal and professional growth.

This is my last editorial as senior editor/founder of IJLLAE. Incoming senior editor, Susan Whiteland takes the helm for the next two years. To our authors, reviewers, readers, and editorial staff, thank you for your continued support.