

American Educational Research (AERA)  
Abstracts  
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**Educating for and through Appreciation: Constructing Contemporary Worlds of and for Educational Quality**

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University of Tasmania, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This symposium shall interrogate notions of educational quality through the investigation of the ways in which 'appreciation' has been researched, theorized and practiced in and through the Humanities and Fine Arts. Speakers in the symposium shall provide perspectives of appreciation from the disciplines of dance, drama, music, poetry, creative writing, and the visual arts and generate critical commentary concerning the ways in which appreciation is foundational to educational thought and practice in and beyond the Humanities and Fine Arts. The symposium shall draw on research findings to re-frame contemporary debates concerning Humanities and Fine Arts learning and instruction including: 'arts literacies', the 'sustainability of standards of artistic judgment', and the 'uses of the arts' within worlds of educational quality.

**1. Contextualizing Arts Appreciation within Learning and Instruction: Reflections from the *Handbook of Research in Arts Education*.**

Liora Bresler  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This presentation will contextualize research on appreciation within the larger world of learning and instruction research (Bresler, 2006). It will examine the quiet development that has taken place globally in the past 40 years -- positioning the disciplines of arts education within the larger umbrella of the arts and educational theory and practice. Through this development the individual disciplines have maintained their distinctive identities, organizations, traditions, and areas of practice and scholarship whilst simultaneously generating new links between arts forms and across disciplines. What this reframing and its curricular, pedagogical, institutional, and artistic structures generate is a productive tension between the individual arts disciplines and the larger arena that is referred to as "arts" and "arts education." This productive tension creates interest in learning about existing practice and research in the various arts education communities to explore ways that they can cross fertilize each other. In this discussion, arts appreciation, grounded in aesthetic approaches, has been central, and holds important ramifications for learning and instruction research, theory, and practice.

Bresler, L. (2006 in press) (Ed.) *Handbook of Research in Arts Education*. Amsterdam: Springer Press.

**2. Dance Appreciation as Dance Literacy**

Ann Dils  
University of Carolina at Greensboro

In this presentation, I will introduce dance appreciation teaching and learning as the fostering of dance literacy, then discuss current teaching strategies that help students realize dances and dancing as presenting multiple aesthetic, social, and cultural meanings. While many dance appreciation courses are taught in colleges and universities in the United States, dance appreciation is a curricular construct, a parallel drawn with music, theatre, and art appreciation courses, but not a field of study with a well-developed body of teaching and learning research. It is possible, however, to frame a discussion about dance appreciation using writings in literacy studies, art education, dance studies, and dance criticism, as well as writings about teaching practices in dance and dance appreciation. In addition to my own research and teaching experiences, writings by Henry Giroux and by Tina Hong on literacy in the arts, Candace Feck on dance writing in the classroom, and Mary Fitzgerald and Jennifer Tsukayama, on community dance work will be important to my presentation.

The word “appreciation” conjures up a learned regard for an aesthetic object, a recognition and perhaps an assessment of quality. In my teaching, and in the course of collaborative projects involving the development of materials for dance learning, I have come to prefer the term “dance literacy.” Engagement with the written word is important to dance, but so are understanding and expression through writing and reading the body in motion. Slipping through time and over space, the dancer gathers and sheds meanings, as he molds his body (already laden with social and cultural possibilities) through motions and in interactions that are themselves evocative and metaphoric. The literate viewer, even from the safe remove of a theatre seat, has a commitment to respond, to be transported by the dancing at the same time she grounds it through her own experience. Here, embodied knowing and memory—emotions, ideas, relationships, sensations, as held in shapes, energies, and rhythms—mix with broader understandings of the world—the arts, history, contemporary culture and politics.

In the dance appreciation classroom, literacy is fostered through observation, discussion, and writing. These exercises can be pursued through multiple approaches, with students realizing their own habits of viewing, preconceptions about bodies and about dancing, and moving toward critical inquiry. Dancing is also an important component. Collaborative dance-making allows students to experience dance as a social act and to use aesthetic tools to build meaning.

### **3. Appreciation: The Weakest Link in Drama/Theatre Education**

Shifra Schonmann  
University of Haifa

Research in drama/theatre education has been largely empirical, whilst philosophical research has been considerably weaker. Consequently, appreciation, which is philosophical in nature has not been well developed and is the weakest link in drama/theatre education thinking. However, some empirical studies have been conducted that seek to answer questions about children's appreciation about theatre for young audiences.

My use of appreciation is related to judgment and criticism. In this presentation the emphasis is on "Appreciative criticism" and the intention is to raise the questions

“How do we educate to appreciate theatre”? How do we acknowledge its importance in curriculum development?

The arguments for including dramatic arts in school curricula are based on the understanding that dramatic arts must operate as an integral and significant element in the life of all children in schools. The emerging understanding is that dramatic activity in schools should not be only a method of learning and teaching but a subject that needs to have a 'proper' content. Thus *appreciation* becomes a center of professional discussions such as in recent work of Prendergast's (2004) who explores ways to develop audiences for performance through education. She proposes “...a curriculum theory of audience-in-performance (AIP). This is a curriculum that intends to nurture an audience that is aware of its psycho/social/cultural responsibilities and that consists of perceivers and memory-keepers and questioners in genuine dialogue with performance and performing artists” (Prendergast, 2004, p.89)

The experience of viewing a theatre performance is an activity that involves the audience in the interpretation of the multiplicity of signs. Thus when trying to understand what makes a theatrical performance a work of art we learn that answers should acknowledge audience relationships with a performance. In this context examining the aesthetic of audience response is crucial.

There have been few attempts to analyze this crucial dimension of theatrical art or to develop an understanding of what it means in terms of theatre for young people. The main argument here is that the real power of a play is found when it is tested upon an actively involved audience that exercises appreciation through overt participation. Understanding the essence of the artistic and the aesthetic that are the object of appreciation can help us strengthen the weakest link of appreciation in drama/theatre education.

Prendergast, M. (2004). 'Shaped like a question mark': found poetry from Herbert Blau's *The Audience*. *Research in Drama Education*, 9 (1), 73-92.

#### **4. On Being and Becoming: Approaches to Learning Music Appreciation**

Margaret Barrett

University of Tasmania

In an I-Pod age where music is a constant accompaniment to, enhancement of, or protection from the experiences of daily life, how is music appreciation understood and practiced? Importantly, how is it to be approached in educational contexts? Music education has tended to draw its approach to music appreciation from the traditions of the western concert hall, and the sociological, psychological and philosophical theories that underpin the practices of these settings. For Dewey, it is our task to restore continuity between the experience of the everyday, and that of art. He reminds us that to understand the aesthetic, we must “begin with it in the raw” (1934, p. 3) in attentiveness to everyday experience, in order to move beyond a “compartmental conception of art” that locates art “in a region inhabited by no other creature, and that emphasize(s) beyond all reason the merely contemplative character of the aesthetic” (1934, p. 8). In this way our experience of the everyday can be brought to our developing understanding of art and, in an on-going dialogue, our understanding of art can inform our experience of the everyday.

In this presentation I shall interrogate the frames we bring to the experience of and interaction with music: frames that when left unexamined, may unconsciously shape our attention, our interests, and our judgments. I shall examine the ways in which modernist views of appreciation and the aesthetic have shaped the research endeavor and teaching project in music education, discuss the implications of this legacy for the development of music appreciation in school and community settings, and suggest alternative approaches that seek to restore continuity between the experience of the everyday, and that of art.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group.

### **5. Later in the Early World: The Changing Role of Poetry and Creative Writing in the K-12 Classroom**

Terry Hermsen and Stuart Lishan

Otterbein College and Ohio State University

This presentation will call on the ghost of Elwyn Richardson's (1964) classic text, *In the Early World*, as a model for the integration of creative writing into the whole of the curriculum. In the late 1950s, Richardson wove poetry, pottery, crafts, story-writing and painting directly into students' pursuit of all other subject matter. What's more, he stressed the arts as a community-building tool, allowing each student to take charge of his or her own artistic growth, while at the same time contributing to an atmosphere of inquiry: what makes a good poem, a good piece of art—and how is such art involved with the process of perception and scholarly investigation? His text thus foreshadows much of the exciting work being done around the world today to re-involve poetry and creative writing with the whole of the curriculum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We will look then at some recent theoretical grounding for just such a direction: the explosion of new interest in metaphor—which is the heart of poetry—and its links to the whole of thinking; and secondly, the push away from New Critical approaches to literature and toward more active methods of student involvement and reader response, as foreshadowed by theorists such as Linda Rosenblatt in the 1930s, as well as Richardson himself, but pressed further by investigators such as Dias, Hayhoe and Benton in the United Kingdom—and elsewhere. Appreciating literature as an active event, one grounded equally in the materials of a text as well as readers' idiosyncratic engagement with that text is a major step toward appreciating the *doing* of creative writing as a parallel process. As we practice the art of writing we enhance our abilities as creative readers. And vice versa.

Finally, we will look at the wealth of “active research” being done in the U.S. and elsewhere by creative writers themselves, offering a few suggestions for texts and exercises which demonstrate how various writers and teachers have taken Richardson's principles to heart, opening up subjects such as history and science, bridging the oft-perceived gap between the “imaginative” and the “factual” that can stymie the flourishing of the arts in our schools. We will close with some examples of student writing, from Richardson's time and our own.

Richardson, E. (1964). *In the early world*. New York: Random House.

## **6. Philosophical Considerations of Art Appreciation**

Terry Barrett  
Ohio State University

Art appreciation is generally assumed and often explicitly claimed to be the desired outcome of art education. This presentation attempts to map philosophical terrains of 'art appreciation', and exemplify acts of appreciation in the visual arts. The purpose of the paper is to expand notions of the concept of art appreciation, to devalue "disinterested" appreciation in favor of engaged appreciation, to broaden the candidates for appreciation, including an appreciation of the "interpreting-self" and the "interpreting-other."

## **7. Art experience as event**

Maxine Greene  
Teachers College, Columbia University

Aesthetic Education is a process of empowering diverse persons with minimal acquaintance in the arts to encounter paintings, works of literature, musical and dance performances with awareness, a degree of reflectiveness, and a particular kind of care. Their imaginations are to be stimulated, their perceptiveness enhanced to such a degree that they can be present to a work as a created world—that they can grasp such a work against the background of their lived lives. An interchange, a transaction is encouraged between the perceiver and the work at hand. Their coming together is an event that leads to the emergence of a work of art, which cannot become a work of art without a human experience grasping it, seeking or making meanings by engagement with it, including hands-on or creative efforts to explore the medium involved. This presentation shall explore the implications of these views for learning and instruction in the Humanities and the Fine Arts.

## **Discussants**

Rena Upitis  
Queens University, Canada

Robert E. Stake  
University of Illinois