

Art Education, Service-learning, and Incarceration: Investigating Power and Practice

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Abstract

This paper presentation describes three different service-learning approaches the authors utilized when working with graduate art education students and incarcerated residents at a municipal jail facility. By situating our experiences within feminist theory, we analyze and unpack the strengths and weaknesses of each arts-based approach. Through an analysis of teacher and student journal entries we came to see that our level of responsiveness to residents needed to increase as compared to our considerations of the university students. We came to see the significant knowledge that the residents hold about excellence in teaching and the possibilities for intervening in the social construction of “who” is entitled to learn and “how.” This created an opportunity for the graduate art education students and ourselves to learn from the residents, shifting the expectations and power dynamics of what is traditionally expected in classrooms as well as assumptions about incarcerated people. We identified three areas that created change in the graduate art education students and faculty members; breaking stereotypes, awareness of privilege, and showing empathy. We believe that service-learning in pre-service art teacher preparation pro-

grams allows university students to learn from and with residents, thus creating more empathetic future teachers. Additionally, the experience of working across socio-cultural differences with a group of peers and under the guidance of a faculty member can help prepare pre-service art educators for the diverse learners they will teach.

Keywords

Arts-based learning, Service-learning, Art education, Justice.