Experiential Pathways to Infusing Spirituality in Pre-Service Teacher Art Education

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In 2008, the National Art Education Association welcomed a new advocacy group, the "Caucus on the Spiritual in Art Education" (CSAE). Among its stated concerns are "to study the relationship between the spiritual impulse and the visual arts, to examine the spiritual aspects of art from various cultures and historical eras […] and to define spiritual concepts in art education." Here, we argue for the importance of infusing spirituality in contemporary classrooms, especially given current controversies around issues related to religion in schools, and because of the divisiveness that increasingly imperils public education among other aspects of society. By contrast, we assert that addressing spirituality through art can help connect students rather than divide them, enabling them to find common ground both through learning about art and through experiences of making it. In this sense, integrating spirituality offers a holistic approach to teaching and learning that is student-centered.

Often the question of whether spirituality should even be associated with U.S. public education mires down discussion that could otherwise expand and broaden the understanding of the myriad ways that infusing spirituality into art classrooms can enhance

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teaching and learning. So understood, spirituality as a pedagogical approach can provide deeply felt personal experiences which make education in and through art meaningful to all students, not just the so-called "artistically gifted." This is the way it is explained by Peter Abbs, a supporter of spirituality in education, who writes:

> In a quite fundamental way, spirituality can be conceived as a part of, as an unplanned outcome of, the natural world, yet opening up within new dimensions of reflection, prophecy, and possibility. It is this distinctive power of consciousness attending to consciousness through sustained acts of recognition and affirmation which illuminates the true nature of spirituality. It is the spiritual in us which aspires toward wholeness, seeks connection, pattern, circumference.[1]

Acknowledging the significant value of the individual and the personal search for spirituality, whether by artists, art teachers, or students of art, we therefore encourage art educators at all levels to consider how spiritual traditions and/or practices can strengthen teaching and learning. Furthermore, we provide a brief look at ways of infusing spirituality in art education, with examples of pedagogical approaches for pre-service art educators.

Spirituality in Art Education: Perspectives and Historical Underpinnings

Spirituality, as discussed below, has deep roots in the history of art and art education, but we will first place it in a contemporary context. In our view, spirituality in art education can serve several widely held educational aims: supporting an integrated approach to

1. Peter Abbs, *Against the Flow: Education, the Arts and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2003), 35.

learning and human development, embracing holism, and offering curriculum content that encompasses individual, national, and global perspectives, whether sacred or secular. However, that said, we also recognize challenges associated with the topic for those who teach in U.S. public schools and for those who prepare future teachers due to the constitutional separation of church and state. Countering such concerns, we explain below that there is no need to equate spirituality with religion. For example, while the term, "religion," is typically defined in terms of an "institutional system of […] attitudes, beliefs, and practices,"[2] "spirituality" can be conceived in much broader terms, such as the awareness of the interconnectedness among all living things. Yet, with or without its association to religion, arguments for addressing spirituality in teaching art can be made both from student-centered and curriculum-centered perspectives.[3]

From a student-centered perspective, concern for the spiritual in art education goes back to some of its early practitioners. Spiritual subject matter was, for example, a focus in the Picture Study movement.[4] Equally, spiritual issues provided inspiration for creative self-expression among progressives, especially those who were therapeutically inclined.[5] Indeed, some theorists, such as Herbert Read and Henry Schaeffer-Simmern, found in the spiritual domain an ultimate aim for the educative enterprise.[6]

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2. *Miriam Webster*, s.v. "religion," accessed August 31, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion.
3. John Dewy, *The Child and the Curriculum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902).
4. For more on this, see Arthur Efland, *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 146.
5. Florence Cane, *The Artist in Each of Us* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1951).
6. See Herbert Read, *Education Through Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1943), and Roy E. Abrahamson, "Henry Schaefer-Simmern's Research and Theory: Implications for Art Education, Art Therapy, and Art for Special Education," in *The History of Art Education: Proceedings from the Penn State Conference*, ed.

As with any topic addressed in genuine student-centered education, issues of spirituality were considered important because they mattered to children and affected their development. The fact that spiritual issues still matter to children around the world today has been demonstrated by psychiatrist Robert Coles, in his book *The Spiritual Life of Children* (1990). Coles, who spent over thirty years documenting the lives of "children in crisis," used drawing to help young people formulate, reflect upon, and communicate their deepest spiritual questions, ideas, and feelings. Importantly, Coles did not set out looking for spiritual issues. Rather such concerns emerged in conversations with children. Topics that came up in this way included: the nature of God, the supernatural, the ultimate meaning of life, and the sacred side of things.[7]

From a curriculum-centered perspective, spiritual matters have been essential subjects of world art from the dawn of civilization through the modernist era[8] and into contemporary art.[9] The importance of the spiritual in world art is indicated by philosopher and historian of Indian Art Ananda Coomaraswamy, who has claimed that, within both "Oriental" [sic] and Christian philosophies, the predominant, or "normal," view of art has been that it always had "a spiritual meaning."[10] While Kandinsky and other modernists argue that spirituality has not always or necessarily been associated with

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Harlan Hoffa and Brent Wilson (College Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1985), 247–255.

7. See Robert Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 1990).

8. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. M. T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, 1977).

9. *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, season 1, "Identity," directed by Deborah Shaffer, created by Susan Sollins and Susan Dowling, aired September 28, 2001, https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s1/identity/.

10. Anna Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (New York: Dover, 1956), 40.

religion,[11] this association remains the historical and contemporary "norm" in traditional art and craft as addressed by Coomaraswamy.

In view of the diversity and complexity of historical and contemporary associations between art and spirituality,[12] Robert Emmons feels the need to caution against framing spirituality and religion in polarized terms – i.e., as always conflated or always incompatible – which he maintains is not helpful for researchers.[13] He advocates for a view which, by identifying areas of overlap between the two concepts, comes to define spirituality as a broader concept which can, but need not necessarily, encompass religion.[14] Emmons thus defines spirituality as "a deep sense of belonging, of wholeness, of connectedness, and of openness to the infinite."[15] This definition allows non-religious people to express their spiritual experiences, and makes it possible to consider spirituality outside of religious beliefs, although religion can certainly house spirituality.

Search and Research: Spiritual in Art and Education

For the authors, the quest for the spiritual in art and education has been both a matter of *search* and *research*. It has been an ongoing search for teachings and practices that nourish our artistic and holistic development in personal as well as professional practices. In terms of research, we have looked for theories of art and spirituality along with works of art reflecting those theories as applicable to teaching

11. See Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.
12. Robert A. Emmons, "Spirituality: Recent Progress," in *A Life Worth Living: Contributions to Positive Psychology*, ed. Mihaly Cskiszentmihalyi and Isabella Selega Cskiszentmihalyi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 62–81.
13. Emmons, "Spirituality," 65.
14. Emmons, "Spirituality," 66.
15. Emmons, "Spirituality," 64.

art, K–12 and beyond. The position taken here is that at the core of artistic efforts is, most importantly, the concern to express and experience our humanity. In this sense, "spiritual" is included as it relates to self and the world as an essential component of consciousness *and* cognition. Janis Lander, in *Spiritual Art and Art Education* (2014) connects spirit, consciousness, and cognition, saying, "separate from religion, that operates within primarily social, moral, fiscal, and community constructs, spiritual is understood as 'consciousness conveying intuitive knowledge to those who experience it.'"[16]

Another association between spirit and cognition, and one more concretely connected to education, is offered by Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner in *Intelligence Reframed* (1999), where he considers extending his original seven intelligences to include a spiritual intelligence.[17] While he stops short of granting the spiritual full status, he does give it half-credit, recognizing the cognitive dimension of the spiritual in asking existential, or ultimate, questions, like: "Why do we exist? What is the meaning of life, of love, of tragic losses, of death?"[18] Such questions have been posed directly or indirectly through art from the dawn of civilization up to the present, for example, in Gaugin's 1897–1898 painting, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*[19]

In thus addressing spiritual questions, art education certainly engages the intellect, but extends learning beyond the intellect alone

16. Janis Lander, *Spiritual Art and Art Education* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 2.
17. Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
18. Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed*, 54.
19. See also Seymore Simmons III, "Living the Questions: Existential Intelligence in the Context of Holistic Art Education," *Visual Arts Research* 32, no. 1 (2006): 41–52, and *The Value of Drawing Instruction in the Visual Arts and Across Curricula*: *Historical and Philosophical Arguments for Drawing in the Digital Age* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

to include emotional, sensory/physical, and moral aspects, i.e., the whole person. As such, it has the potential to help students move toward their full potential, enlarging their entire capacity for learning in and beyond the arts. Indeed, holistic development is often associated with the spiritual in education. Even if it doesn't reach this far for each individual, it can at least provide momentary relief from the "culture of constraint" and homogeneous learning predominant in schools driven by testing and accountability. Along with such personal benefits, this alternative vision of education can have significant academic impact.

Drawing upon both their affective and cognitive capacities, spirituality in education invites students to explore connectedness between subjects, develop global awareness, and expand their cultural literacy. Ultimately, it can help students remember that education is more than the mere acquisition of facts; that it can include self-knowledge and social/environmental responsibility. In this regard, a growing body of research suggests that a contemporary understanding of spirituality provides a foundation for students to explore universal and collective values such as "wisdom, compassion, loving kindness, joy, beauty [and] peacefulness."[20]

Moreover, researchers are currently developing a research paradigm in order to help define a methodology for investigating spirituality in a variety of subjects. According to Lin, Oxford, and Culham,

> A spiritual research paradigm requires an ontology that considers all reality to be multidimensional, interconnected, and interdependent. It requires an epistemology that integrates knowing from outer sources

20. David Ray Griffen, *Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern* Exploration (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), 271.

> as well as inner contemplation, acknowledging our integration of soul and spirit with the body and mind.[21]

They further identify some qualitative methods as suitable for investigating spirituality, such as phenomenology, narrative, and autobiography; however – noting that these methods neglect spirituality as a topic of research – they maintain that a spiritual paradigm, or framework, "will provide researchers from the social sciences and education the tools and abilities to systematically explore fundamental questions regarding human spiritual experiences and spiritual growth."[22] An acceptance of this paradigm will open many doors for researchers in the future. Another methodological possibility is explored by Campbell in her study of spiritual art educators,[23] where she employed "portraiture" as developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Davis (1997).[24] However, the methodology did have limitations in that it was fairly unknown and rarely used.

Children are schooled to know about facts and figures and events and places in society but rarely about themselves, let alone the nature of their full human potential. The arts, with their rich repertoire for exploring paradox, allow for inward focus and expressive investigations, thus providing children with tangible and accessible tools to examine the spiritual questions of life that are an integral part of the human experience. Today, according to Fowler, the arts continue to strengthen identity and relationship with the

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21. Jing Lin, Rebecca L. Oxford, and Tom E. Culham, eds., *Toward a Spiritual Research Paradigm: Exploring New Ways of Knowing, Researching and Being* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2016), ix.
22. Lin, Oxford, and Culham, *Toward A Spiritual Research Paradigm,* x.
23. Laurel H. Campbell, "The Spiritual Lives of Artist/Teachers," *American Educational Research Association* (Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, 2003).
24. See Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis, *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

world by humanizing the curriculum and strengthening the interconnectedness of knowing through multiple modalities.[25] Through the arts, students can artistically and creatively envision a more just and loving community by attending to their own internal development, as well as to their relationships with others.

Spiritual and Pedagogical Approaches to Pre-Service Teacher Education

This section offers several examples of pedagogical approaches to teacher development/pre-service teacher education that align with the aforementioned definitions associated with the spiritual that can be applied within a secular educational context.

Pathway One: Holism and Deep Ecology, Laurel H. Campbell

Holism is an approach to education in which the focus is on student-connecting experiences.[26] Holistic education thus attempts to develop a pedagogy that is interconnected, in contrast to much of traditional education that tends to be static and fragmented. Holistic education also includes spirituality, which is dependent on the educational context and the manner in which it is introduced.

According to Ron Miller, researchers from diverse fields such as science, medicine, psychology, and social theory have suggested that a holistic approach is viable, thus offering holistic

25. Charles Fowler, *Strong Arts, Strong Schools: The Promising Potential and Shortsighted Disregard of the Arts in American Schooling* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
26. John P. Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

educators confirmation and new insights.[27] Holistic educators further encourage students to become active and committed citizens who believe in social justice and ethical living. How does spirituality play a part in this approach? Wright considered the idea of communal spirituality, whereby students search for meaning in their lives together with others.[28] Furthermore, bell hooks (1999) believes that communal spirituality must be taught. She states,

> To be guided by love is to live in community with all life. However, a culture of domination, like ours, does not strive to teach us how to live in community. As a consequence, learning to live in community must be a core practice for all of us who desire spirituality in education.[29]

It should be added here that living in community requires learning skills such as collaboration, cooperation, and tolerance, all of which are compatible with a holistic approach where people strive to live peacefully with others.

In schools, teachers can help students create a sense of community and access their spiritual dimension through carefully planned educational activities that enhance the possibility of students caring more for each other, the earth/environment, and their own potentiality through interconnected pedagogy. This is what psychologists Lakoff and Johnson describe as a spiritual approach, in that it seeks "deep insight into who we are, how we experience the

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27. Ron Miller, *Caring for New Life: Essays on Holistic* Education (Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal, 2000).
28. Andrew Right, "The Child in Relationship: Towards a Communal Model of Spirituality," in *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*, ed. Ron Best (London: Cassell, 1996), 139–149.
29. bell hooks, "Embracing freedom: Spirituality and Liberation," in *The Heart of Learning: Spirituality in Education*, ed. Steven Glazer (New York: Tarcher/ Putnam, 1999), 119.

world, and how we ought to live."[30] Holistic concerns for a community of care and connectedness mirror the holistic sense of connectedness within, between intellect, emotions, and body. Together, they exemplify the relationship between the whole and the part and suggest that teaching and learning approaches need to be rooted in a larger, i.e., holistic, vision. The following example inspired my research into spirituality as interconnectedness, inside and out.

In my several years of teaching pre-service teachers, I have encountered many students who spoke of a deep concern for their students, for art, and for the act of teaching. They act out this concern in many ways, including through spiritual art that encompasses their own transformation during the process. One such example occurred in a methods course that was described in an *Art Education* journal article, "Holistic Art Education: A Transformative Approach to Teaching Art."[31] While discussing personal, holistic growth as teachers, students began to create memory boxes that represented either a loved one or their own experiences through visual art pieces. This project was recreated several times in various locations, all in college art education classes. In all cases, we realized that each person was making visible a personal and spiritual experience, sharing with others their sense of wanting to belong, connect, and transform others through visual representations. This exercise consistently created a sense of community.

What does this mean for our collective teaching practice? We come together in classrooms, sometimes as strangers and sometimes as friends, who need to relate to one another and share experiences

30. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 551.

31. Laurel H. Campbell, "Holistic Art Education: A Transformative Approach to Teaching Art," *Art Education* 64, no. 2 (2011): 18–24.

both in and out of the classroom. The practice of searching for answers to "Who am I as a teacher or person?" is not only allowed, but strongly encouraged by an educator seeking to bring out the whole person. This means having a spiritual presence in the classroom while striving to be a person who is open to creating art that has meaning, and who is capable of representing important searches for answers to our inner questions. From this point, we create curricula that focus on forging communal acts of sharing. As stated in the aforementioned article,

> Holistic approaches to art teaching and curriculum planning address post-modern educational concerns such as multiculturalism, diversity of perspectives, respect for the individual learner, and critical thinking as strategies for helping students interact with visual images.[32]

A diversity of perspectives, in my view, includes a varied and individual concept of spirituality that can and should exist in a contemporary art classroom.

A second example of holistic practice in the art classroom, specifically a pre-service methods class, is one that I created during a summer visual art course based on fibre arts. I required the artists/educators to write a fibre arts craft curriculum that focused on social justice issues or craftivism, an approach which brings social and political issues to the forefront of art making.[33] They chose a variety of issues, including environmental degradation and endangered species; danger to sea life; bullying among students; homelessness in the local community; and the need to recycle, reuse

32. Campbell, "Holistic Art Education," 22.
33. See Elizabeth Garber, "Craft as Activism," *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* 33, no. 1 (2013): 53–66, and Betsy Greer, *The Art and Craft of Activism* (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010).

and recreate with fibres and clothing. In guiding these pre-service artists/educators through this project, I recognized in them a sense of deeper understanding that conjured up thoughts of spiritual concern for others, our larger community, and the world.

They talked with each other throughout the exercise about such issues, which they were seeking to illuminate and share with the class. Each curriculum that was written included space and time for students to discuss with the class their thoughts on creating change for each problem they addressed. It was clear that these artists/educators felt positive about their chance to address issues for which they cared deeply, and this practice is in keeping with the tradition of artworks that express social or political ideas. Further, it is important for these exercises that the environment of the class feel safe for students to look inward and express outwardly their thoughts and beliefs through their works of art. Holistic education and spirituality in art education necessarily allow for the opportunity for open and thoughtful discussions that promote a personal sense of caring.

Pathway Two:
Contemplative Practices, Jane E. Dalton

Recognizing that even in "ordinary life," students come to school with spiritual issues, this pathway focuses on the benefits pre-service teachers can gain from contemplative practices which help them get in touch with their spiritual impulses and their own spiritual questions.

Beyond that, contemplative practices offer opportunities for students to create lives of purpose and meaning by providing experiences that put them at the center of their own learning, finding the material within themselves and making holistic connections to content. "Personal introspection and contemplation reveal our

inextricable connection to each other, opening the heart and mind to true community, deeper insight, sustainable living, and a more just society."[34] Contemporary contemplative pedagogy draws upon practices such as meditation, mindful sitting and walking, beholding, and silence and solitude in nature, all of which are aimed at cultivating focused attention and an inward gaze to bridge the inner world with the outer. These practices have been fundamental to wisdom traditions across time and cultures. As such, they can help dissolve divisions between different religions, but it is only recently that these practices have found their way into teaching and learning.[35]

Contemplative practices also add a missing element that enhances both the rational and sensory. Different than traditional modes of acquiring knowledge through the assimilation of information, contemplative awareness opens space for receptivity and embodied knowing: that is, knowing that is located in the lived body.[36] According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the body *and* the mind, are what understand and experience the world; the two are entwined.[37] Contemplative practice, therefore, depends on cultivating an understanding of oneself, as well as one's relationship and interdependence with others and the world. Moreover, this holistic engagement and attention foster the student finding themselves in the material. And, while many educators might wonder about the benefits

34. Daniel P. Barzbeat and Mirabai Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2013), xv.
35. See Barzbeat and Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*, and Arthur Zajonc, *When Knowing Becomes Love: Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2009).
36. Jane E. Dalton, "Artfully Aware: Contemplative Practices in the Classroom Classroom," *International Journal of Arts Education* 11 (2016): 33–40.
37. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1962).

of cultivating a student's inward gaze, there can be little disagreement about teaching them to focus their attention!

Meditation, Mindfulness and Centering

One form of contemplative practice is meditation, in particular, mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness practice reaches thousands of years into the past and is often associated with Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, but also has roots in all major religions that aim to cultivate an inner experience of equanimity, awareness, and connection. "Mindfulness is both a process (mindfulness practice) and an outcome (mindful awareness)."[38] As a process, mindfulness is not only a matter of the mind, but is rather holistic in both its practice and its results. Among the latter, research on the effects of mindfulness training indicates contributions to cognitive development, attention skills, and the building of executive function; but equally, it supports immune function and emotional regulation, all leading to improvement in test scores, reduction in impulsivity, and overall, an enhanced sense of well-being.[39]

Mindfulness has become increasingly popular in response to today's overactive and overly distracted lifestyles. By contrast, it means drawing awareness to the present moment, stilling the mind to absorb the experience. In schools, it enables students to take a break from their thinking mind while offering a different way of being and knowing. To engage mindfully, one becomes comfortable with being present in the moment, which is quite the opposite of what schooling

38. Barzbeat and Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*, 95.
39. Daniel. J. Rechtschaffen, *The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 4–5.

often emphasizes. Ellen Langer, in *Mindful Learning* (1997), writes that,

> From kindergarten on the focus of schooling is usually on goals rather than the process by which they are achieved. This single-minded pursuit of one outcome or another […] makes it difficult to [have] a mindful attitude toward life. Questions of 'Can I?' or 'What if I can't do it?' are likely to predominate, creating an anxious preoccupation with success or failure rather than drawing on the child's natural, exuberant desire to explore.[40]

Creating a mindful experience for teaching and learning is at the core of bringing mindfulness into pre-service art teacher education. Mindfulness is about direct experience, which, in the arts, is not only relevant but beneficial to the process of ideas, materials, and maker.

The connection between meditation, mindfulness, and art has long been recognized. Rosch, for example, explains that "both meditation and the arts tap into basic intuition [...] meditation and art can illuminate each other and can do so beyond particular artistic styles or practices."[41] The experience of art, when offered as a mindful practice, thereby provides an alternative way of knowing that quiets the mind, cultivates sensory qualities, strengthens creativity, imagination and insight while also enhancing divergent thinking.[42]

Practically speaking, mindfulness in the art classroom provides a deeper connection with the material, enabling students to value the present moment and engage with full-bodied awareness, an

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40. Ellen J. Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 33–34.

41. Eleanore Rosch, "If You Depict a Bird, Give it Space to Fly," in *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*, ed. Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 38.

42. See Barzbeat and Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*, Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning,* and Rechtschaffen, *The Way of Mindful Education*.

embodied learning that involves physical, sensory, emotional, and cognitive capacities, while balancing the precision of an analytical mind with the more intuitive functions involved in affective knowing. Embodied knowing, therefore, acknowledges that the understanding of material content and experience is shaped by feelings that lie beyond the realm of objective knowledge and cognition. While such ideas may be relatively new in general education, they have long been a part of art education. For example, Kenneth Beittel explains that "art develops through the physical realm of medium and process, in and through the body […] and through a history of their interaction along with an intentional path which takes on its own purpose and reality in action."[43]

We can be mindful in many ways besides meditation; however, I believe meditation provides an entry point into cultivating awareness in pre-service teachers. Simply put, it means pausing and connecting with the ever-shifting experience at any given moment to observe the nature of our relationship to that experience in the present.

Preparing pre-service teachers to incorporate such practices requires recognizing how, in their future classrooms, they will bring their whole selves to the practice of teaching and learning. Toward that end, offering two minutes of silence and centering before beginning each class is one approach that allows pre-service teachers to leave behind, even if just for a few moments, the business of the day. At the beginning of class I provide pre-service teachers with a short meditation experience focused on the breath, a common tool for engaging mindfulness awareness aimed at centering and cultivating presence to each other and to the course material. This short and

43. Kenneth R. Beittel, "Art for a New Age," *Visual Arts Research* 11, no. 1 (1985): 26.

simple grounding exercise has demonstrated that uniting students through simple breathing synchronizes students' attention and cultivates presence. The oftentimes chaotic energy of entering and settling into the classroom is thereby replaced by centered and focused attention, enhancing teaching and learning.

Mindfulness can also include guided visualization as a form of meditation. Offering a short, three-to-five-minute guided visualization before an art experience provides pre-service teachers with an embodied experience that informs their making and nurtures creativity and imagination. In addition, these short, guided visualizations can align with thematic curricular design around any topic, such as love, justice, beauty, nature, etc. For example, leading students in a guided visualization recalling an experience of expressing love or receiving love establishes a personal foundation for creating a work of art based on that theme. What is felt or embodied then contributes to a more expanded approach to creating from personal experience, whether painting, drawing, sculpting, or using expressive marking making. Students engage with breath, body, sensations, and the present moment. It is complex, yet it is simple. One breath, one moment, and an expanded range of experiencing, understanding, and learning is available to pre-service teachers.

Closing Thoughts

Whether or not the spiritual dimension of art education is taught explicitly, implicitly, or not at all, the "spirit" behind it, that is, the interconnectedness between us and the essential commonalities among us, are critical for education in today's schools. This is especially true as student populations become increasingly diverse. Central to that spirit is the recognition that diversity is an asset and not a deficit; that we can all learn from one

another, and that what we learn from one another feeds our shared humanity.[44]

There is an importance to educating the "spirit," which some prefer to call the "'soul,' and others the 'heart' or 'heart-mind.'"[45] We believe the discussion of the role of spirituality in education is not only essential to learning, but critical to the wholeness of both students and teachers. We, therefore, offer up a question for our pre-service teachers in hopes that this will extend to conversations beyond higher education and take place in K–12 classrooms: What kinds of research into spirituality can teachers themselves do and how can this apply to their focus on student growth as whole persons?

44. See New York University, s.v. "An Asset-Based Approach to Education: What it is and Why it Matters," *Thought Leadership* (blog), October 28, 2018, https://teachereducation.steinhardt.nyu.edu/an-asset-based-approach-to-education-what-it-is-and-why-it-matters/.

45. John P. Miller, "Seeking wholeness," in *Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education: Breaking New Ground*, ed. John P. Miller, Selia Karsten, and Diana Denton (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2015), 234.

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