

# Art teacher preparation does the path to certification in Florida matter?

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ART TEACHER PREPARATION: DOES THE PATH TO CERTIFICATION IN  
FLORIDA MATTER?

by

DEANNA JEAN PRICE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Art Education  
in the College of Education  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Dr. Thomas M. Brewer

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## **ABSTRACT**

For years now, students have been learning from two different types of teachers: Teachers who received certification from a traditional training program at a university and teachers who became certified through alternative certification routes. Does the educational preparation of an art teacher matter? Is alternative certification as effectual as traditional teacher preparation programs? Darling- Hammond (2006) says, “Evidence indicates that teachers who have had more preparation for teaching are more confident and successful with students than those who have had little or none.” This thesis will examine and analyze alternative teacher certification in art education for the state of Florida, in a selected county in central Florida, and the traditional teacher certification program via a university path.

I am choosing to base this study on my own program of study. I am on the path receive a Bachelor’s degree through a traditional art education preparation program. This topic will be discussed by conducting a review of literature. Articles from scholars will be cited in order to provide evidence to support the conclusion that art teachers who are traditionally certified are better prepared for the art classroom than art teachers who attained certification via an alternative route.

In order to carry out this investigation, an autoethnography will be included, which will include personal experiences, such as going through a traditional art teacher certification program, which is a four year Bachelor’s degree in art education and observing art teachers who have completed different types of certification, leading me to the conclusion that traditionally certified art teachers are more prepared.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Problem**

Have you ever heard someone say, “The most I can draw is a stick figure,” or “I cannot draw or make art for the life of me.” How about, “She must have been born an artist,” or “She just seems to have the gift to teach.” However, art, like teaching, is something that is learned, developed, practiced, and put into use, and the best way for students to acquire knowledge and skills surrounding art is to be taught by an art teacher who is prepared and educated, not just in art or education, but in both: Art education.

In the field of art education, one characteristic that describes a successful art teacher is one who is knowledgeable of the field and the practices in both art and education. In art education in Florida, different routes are possible to attain teacher certification: 1.) the traditional path, which is through a college or university in art education K-12, and 2.) alternative certification through a public school district, a private entity, or simply passing a test. The question is which path is better? What is the determinant that signifies which path produces a more well- rounded qualified art teacher?

This problem is important to investigate because the success and longevity of traditionally certified teachers and alternatively certified teachers has been a hot topic of controversy for years now. What factors contribute to creating a successful well-grounded teacher? Ongoing research continues to try and identify issues pertaining to the type of teacher preparation for alternative programs.

This study relates to previous work in this field because of teacher education. This persists because more and more alternative avenues have opened and been made available to prospective teachers. Several articles have been developed in hopes to provide more information on the two different paths to certification. In one of his published articles, Richard M. Ingersoll (2004) writes, “The failure to ensure that the nation’s classrooms are all staffed with qualified school teachers is one of the most important problems in contemporary American education (p. 45).” This is problem continues and a solution is still being sought. This study will build upon earlier reports and enhance prior research by providing personal experiences and narratives through writing an autoethnography in order to provide insight from firsthand experiences.

The objective of this study is to explain the notion that traditional teacher certification provides better preparation than alternative certification. My hypothesis is that traditional art teacher certification paths deliver more successful art teachers in public schools than those who received alternative certification.

Philip Meeson, from Brighton College of Education, stated in one of his articles that, “The fine art concept of art education has also moved away from its earlier connotations which implied a close adherence to the academic tradition in art education, a tradition which attached prime importance to the skill of drawing, and had moved towards a somewhat broader view which encompasses art appreciation, art history and those various interdisciplinary and cross-subject groupings which link art with the broader pattern of learning as a whole,” (*n.d.*, pg. 293). In this modern era, the art teacher’s job not only is to teach the skills on how to produce a successful piece of art, but also to educate students on art history, art criticism, and integrate art

within different subjects. The conundrum is how can it be determined which art teacher has the best preparation when it comes to the education they received? Is a teacher who received certification through a traditional path or a teacher who received certification through an alternative path better qualified to teach art?

### **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this research is to explore the controversial issues pertaining to art teacher certification when it comes to which path is the better route. By evaluating both routes and providing the success rates and other relevant, important information about both routes based upon research that scholars have conducted and collected as well as my own experience in the field thus far. This research can also be useful for those who may be confused or have misconceptions as to whether or not one should take the traditional path to certification or an alternative course, as well as for hiring officials and teacher educators.

In their published article in the National Art Education Association magazine, Smilan and Miraglia (2009) point out that the belief that anyone who enjoys art is capable of teaching art is a huge misconception. Teachers must know their content area and have the adequate education and knowledge that will enhance their understanding of the classroom. This research will offer an examination of alternative certification and traditional certification so that there can be a better understanding to each of these certification paths.

Additionally, this research is being conducted for the purpose of pursuing personal interest. As a novice teacher, the current area of research that I am most intrigued by surrounds this topic. After observing several art teachers and completing an internship, the valuable

experiences I have received from these instances have led to my curiosity on this topic. I anticipate suggesting further solutions in regard to this area of research as well as contributing to the field of art education by creating an autoethnography, therefore giving readers my insight and path chosen.

### **Assumptions**

My assumption is that teachers who have received certification through a traditional path are better prepared than those who have received teacher certification through an alternative route. By attending a traditional teacher preparation program, more classes are required as well as more field work, such as observations and internships. For example, at a university, it takes students approximately four years to receive a bachelor's degree in art education. If one gets a degree in art education, that is 120 credit hours across approximately four years, with specific competencies and coursework required to graduate with the degree. In the state of Florida, as long as one has a bachelor's degree, which can be irrelevant to the desired subject of teaching, one is automatically qualified to teach. Additionally, traditional programs take longer than alternative certification routes, therefore, giving individuals more time on task and more learning.

In his article published in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (1986), Michael D. Day writes, "The teacher is unable to raise pupils to the 'highest human level' unless the teacher is also an artist," (p. 39). As an art teacher, one must be familiar with the variety of artistic mediums and how to put them to best or even unusual use. Similarly, an art teacher must know how to teach as well as manage several students at once. Teaching is an art in itself and, just like art, it is something that is learned. Having the ability to teach and produce art are not honed skills

that people are inherently born with. They are developmental skills that must be learned, just as most things in life. Inherent admiration of artistic talent or love of children might bring prospective teachers to seek certification, therefore, my hypothesis to be examined is that traditionally certified teachers are better prepared than those with alternative certification.

In their published article, *Efficacy of Alternative Certification Programs: A Study of the Florida Model*, Suell and Piotrowski (2006, p. 310) reports that, “It is estimated that the state will need 16,000 new teachers every year for the next 8 years as a result of the high teacher retirement rates, attrition in the field, and lack of interest in recent graduates of college teacher preparation programs.” According to the above statement, the demand for teachers is high. A fast way to meet this demand is to recruit teachers who went through alternative certification programs, being that many of these programs require little time to complete. However, these programs are merely a shortcut to nearly jump straight into the field of teaching. It is important to not recruit just any art teacher, but a qualified art teacher that has been well prepared for the profession.

### **Research Questions**

- 1.) What characteristics make an art teacher a qualified and successful?
- 2.) What if another option existed to receive alternative certification that required participants to do more supervised field work and internships, just as it is required by traditional programs? Could more hands-on experience better prepare art teachers who are taking an alternative path?

3.) Some individuals believe teaching art is right for them until they actually step foot in the classroom and then realize they went into the wrong career; what could be a solution to this issue so that soon to be art teachers can have the exposure they need to better ensure that teaching is their “right” career?

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

The success of traditionally certified teachers and alternatively certified teachers has been a hot topic of controversy for years now. What factors contribute to creating a successful teacher? This research as well as ongoing research continues to try and identify issues pertaining to the type of preparation for alternative programs.

Carroll (2011) from the Maryland Institute College of Art wonders about the ethical issues surrounding K-12 students who receive art instruction from teachers who are underprepared. Teachers are considered qualified to teach based on achieving a bachelors degree in an unrelated field that may be completely irrelevant to their subject area. Not only that, but the tendency for alternative programs offers less coursework and preparation than that of a traditional program. Darling-Hammond (2000, p.17) offers this caveat, “Individuals who have had no powerful teacher education intervention often maintain a single cognitive and cultural perspective that makes it difficult for them to understand the experiences, perceptions, and knowledge bases that deeply influence the approaches to learning of students who are different from themselves.”

Many believe that teaching requires more than having passion for a specific content area. In fact, most educators consider teaching an art in itself that must be carefully examined and learned. Darling-Hammond (2000, p.166) states, “...The extent and quality of teacher education matter for teachers’ effectiveness, perhaps now even more than before.” Darling- Hammond also presents results from a specific study which found that even though individuals who were interested in alternative certification may enter the alternative program with the intention to

make teaching a career, many individuals end up not completing the abbreviated program because they may feel discouraged or unsuccessful.

Alternative certification is in fact an option when seeking to become certified to teach, but it does not necessarily mean that it may be the most efficient or effective. Several studies have shown that alternative certification participants “tend to be less satisfied with their training and have greater difficulties planning curriculum, teaching, managing the classroom, and diagnosing students’ learning needs,” (Darling- Hammond, 2000, p. 167). This rings true for many in regard to alternative certification which often lacks a large quantity of necessary teaching strategies and training tools. Successful teachers should be able to utilize art proven teaching strategies so that their K-12 students have the opportunity to succeed at their highest level.

In their article published in Education Policy Analysis Archives, Marszalek, Odom, LaNasa, and Adler (2010, p. 3) proclaim that, “In August 2005, to address teacher shortages, federal policy makers revised the definition of *highly qualified* to include teachers enrolled in alternative teacher certification programs.” Therefore, any individual who holds a bachelor’s degree can teach as long as they are enrolled in or have completed an alternative certification program.

Additionally, in this article, Masrzalek et. al (2010) mentions that prior to this, in 2002, president George W. Bush signed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). These two acts defined a highly qualified teacher as having their bachelor’s degree in education, the traditional route. Due to teacher shortages, a shortcut to teacher certification has been installed in the education system. Their question is: Will the recent definition of a highly qualified teacher change student learning and achievement (Marszalek et. al, 2010, p. 3)? Their answer is left open to interpretation, but



inevitably, the authors state degree of change is expected in student learning by having teachers who are teaching art out of field and who bypassed traditional preparation.

In his article published by Brookings Institution Press, Ingersoll (2004, p. 51) says that, “When faced with the difficulty in finding qualified candidates to fill openings, school principals might opt to hire an available but under qualified teacher at the cost of a regular teacher salary, might choose to reassign an existing teacher to cover part or all of the hard- to- staff classes at no additional salary, or might decide to employ a long- term substitute teacher at a relatively low salary.” Not only is alternative certification an optional shortcut to art teacher certification, but teachers who are teaching out of the art field are now being recruited to teach art.

Similarly, Brewer (2006) notes that several states “have developed alternative routes into the teaching profession in order to bypass some of the ‘burdensome’ certification requirements of traditional preparation (p. 271).” After reading this article, one must ask: Is alternative certification a shortcut to authentic teacher training? Would the public accept an alternative route to receiving certification as a heart surgeon that could be completed in a year after an undergraduate degree, if that were possible? Would the public have more confidence and comfort in seeking an expert who was prepared through an accredited college or university and received a specialized degree with supervised field experience, or with someone who took a fast track alternative? Teaching can be viewed with a similar lens. Would a parent prefer their child to be learning from an art teacher who had four years of experience in their undergraduate degree observing classrooms with other teachers, completing two internships in the field, and taking courses that cover a wide spectrum of research strategies teachers must know such as classroom management and being able to communicate with ESOL students, or would a parent prefer an art

teacher who took an alternative route to certification that did not address many of the foundational educational issues? How possible is it to truly be prepared to educate hundreds of students with such minimal amount of training?

S. Milton, Curva, and Milton (2011) examined Initial Teacher Preparation Programs (either a bachelors or masters in education), District Alternative Certification Programs (alternative certification received through a county district), and Educator Preparation Institutes (which offers college graduates paths to attain certification). Their results found that 52.2 % of teachers who received certification through traditional teacher preparation programs felt the program was effective, where as 38% found receiving certification through District Alternative Certification Programs to be effective, and 50.3% claimed that certification through Educator Preparation Institutes is effective. The study illustrates that the highest percent of effectiveness came from teachers who received certification from a traditional teacher preparation program. The teachers who received certification by an alternative route had a lower percentage in regards to program effectiveness.

More importantly, S. Milton et. al. (2011) proclaims that, “A central issue in teacher preparation program policy is the comparative quality of teachers who have taken different routes to teacher preparation.” In the same study, principals answered three questions in relation to their observations pertaining to the quality of their teachers. They were asked to rate teachers based on the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices, reading instruction, and their ability to prepare students for test taking. Based on the results, roughly 78% of the teachers who were rated as highly effective in these categories were teachers who received traditional education degrees.

Although the study (Milton, et al., 2011) revealed that educators who received traditional certification proved to be rated and perceived by principals as more effective in certain categories, conversely, the overall rating of competency for the teachers showed no differences between the program types. Perhaps some aspects of teaching are accomplished successfully through alternative art certification. When one considers teachers with alternative certification, just as with traditional certification, they may also be effective and competent teachers.

Additionally, Milton, et al. (2011) mentions that Florida is continuing to succeed in addressing their extreme teacher shortages by providing alternative certification options. The highest levels of shortages exist in middle and high schools (Milton, et al., 2011). Furthermore, many teachers and principals who participated in their survey said they were very satisfied with the preparation from teachers who graduated from a variety of certification paths.

Nevertheless, in certain areas of this study, the success rate of effectiveness of teachers from all three routes to certification was close to equal. For example, 52.2% of teachers who received certification through traditional programs found their program to be effective. Additionally, 50.3 % of teachers who received certification through an Educator Preparation Institute said the program provided sufficient preparation (Milton, et al., 2011).

In regard to art education, Stankiewicz (2007) notes that artists who call themselves teachers may lack any sort of professional teacher training, but that the difference between these individuals and art teachers is that preservice art teachers are studying to become true art educators. A difference exists between the artist and the art educator because art education is a combination of both art and education, as where being an artist is solely about creating and producing works of art. An art teacher who earned certification is placed in the important role of

being an art teacher regardless of the path chosen to obtain certification; however, researchers are continuing to provide evidence that reveals the significance of an education degree versus alternative certification.

### **Traditional Art Teacher Certification**

The phrase *traditional art teacher program* refers to art education programs at universities where a four year bachelor's degree in art education is earned. Typically, an art education degree requires general education core courses such as: math, science, english, and government or economics as well as electives and mandatory art classes, education classes, and art education classes.

At some colleges and universities across the nation, receiving teacher certification is included in the art education bachelor's program. This means that when a student graduates with a bachelor's degree in art education, that student is ready and certified to teach because he or she is fully certified to do so. In 1997, Florida legislation determined certification to be a separate process from graduation for all teachers in all subjects, paving a way for future alternative certification.

Senior Lecturer in Art at Brighton College of Education, Phillip Meeson, said this in one of his articles, "The aim of art education at this stage of its history [19<sup>th</sup> century] was relatively simple, it was to develop in those children considered to have sufficient aptitude the necessary manual skills to enable them to become, after training, skilled industrial artisans capable of transforming a designer's instructions into a manufactured product," (*n.d.* p. 292). Art in elementary and secondary schools were not always a means of teaching fine art to students.

Meeson claims that in the past, teaching art was solely for the purpose of creating artisans who could invent products for manufacturers.

Moreover, Messon (*n.d.* p. 293) states that, “The fine art concept of art education has also moved away from its earlier connotation which implied a close adherence to the academic tradition in art education, a tradition which attached prime importance to the skill of drawing, and has moved towards a somewhat broader view which encompasses art appreciation, art history, and those various interdisciplinary and cross-subject groupings which link art with the broader pattern of learning as a whole.” With drastic changes in the field of art education from its past to present, also accompanying these changes was the reform and growth of traditional art education teacher preparation programs and the emergence of alternative teacher certification programs.

In her doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Central Florida, Julie Helton (2008, p. iv) found that traditional teacher preparations began in the United States in 1839. These academic programs consisted of courses which prepared preservice teachers in teaching methods, subject area content, and education foundations. Additionally, she discovered that these common elements remained in place until 2007. Perhaps, they continue still.

### **Alternative Art Teacher Certification**

Conversely, alternative art teacher certification is approached in a completely different manner. Alternative art teacher certification is designed for individuals who have a bachelor’s degree outside of art education and who later decide that they want to be an art teacher. Several different paths to attain alternative art teacher certification exist, and many of these programs take only one year.

Some alternative art teacher certification programs allow art teachers to teach *while* they are in the process of getting certified while others require completion of the program before teaching can occur. Some of these programs are available online while others are in a classroom setting.

In her study, Helton (2008, p. iv) also mentions that alternative teacher certification began in the 1800's and was widely used in 2007 to meet Florida's population boom and related teacher shortages. Additionally, she notes that according to the U.S. Department of Education, by 2006, 47 states had alternative teacher certification programs. Half of these programs were at colleges and universities, while 21% were at schools districts, and 5% were provided through the Department of Education. "From 2000-2004, the number of alternative program teachers increased almost 40% from 29,671 to 40,925," (Helton, 2008, p. 54) (US DOE, 2006).

Barnett Barry's (2001, p. 34) published article reports that, "In a recent analysis, about 60% of individuals who enter teaching through shortcut programs leave the profession by their third year, compared to about 30% of traditionally trained teachers, and only about 10 to 15% of teachers prepared in extended five-year teacher education programs." This clearly insinuates that traditional certification programs are legit and provide the education necessary for teaching for preservice teachers. The next chapter provides a look into the two different routes to certification.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Alternative Art Teacher Certification in Florida and a Selected Florida County in Florida**

To receive alternative art teacher certification in the state of Florida in any county, a bachelor's degree is required. If the degree is in another subject area, it does not affect eligibility to become an art teacher through alternative teacher certification. Additionally, in the state of Florida, alternative teacher preparation programs do not prepare particular teachers for their subject area's, rather, alternative certification programs have more focus on the pedagogical practices of teaching (Florida Department of Education, 2005).

In the state of Florida, two different types of teaching certificates that are available: 1.) the Professional Teaching Certificate and 2.) the Temporary Teaching Certificate. The Professional Teaching certificate can be attained by one of following ways: 1.) If a person has already earned a teaching certificate, but it is from another state, 2.) If the individual holds a teaching certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, or 3.) If the person graduated through a traditional teacher education program and has already passed each of the three teacher examinations. The professional certificate is valid for five years and is renewable (Florida Department of Education, 2006).

In the state of Florida, the temporary teaching certificate is more readily available, but is only valid for three years and cannot be renewed. To qualify for a temporary teaching certificate, a person must meet one of the following criteria: 1.) Possess a bachelor's degree in the content area in which they wish to teach (for example, if an artist wanted to become an art teacher, they would automatically be eligible because he or she received a bachelor's degree in art, which is

the content area), 2.) Possess a bachelor's degree with the required courses and at least a 2.5 GPA in the content area (in this case, art), 3.) Possess a Bachelor's degree and have passed the Subject Area Exam, or 4.) Possess a bachelor's degree with a valid teaching certificate from the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (Florida Department of Education, 2006).

I selected the county I am completing my last and final art teaching internship in order to discuss the requirements for alternative certification, because I am most familiar with this county so far. Each county has different requirements that must be fulfilled to meet the standards of becoming an art teacher through the route of alternative teacher certification. In the selected county I chose, there are a few requirements one must meet in order to attain an alternative teaching certificate.

In the selected county I am choosing to explore, an individual seeking to be an art teacher does not have to have their alternative teacher certification prior to applying for employment and teaching positions. Teachers can work on their certification requirements while teaching. This means that the only singular requirement they must meet in the beginning of their teaching career is to have a bachelor's degree in any content area.

This county has a recommended timeline for completing alternative teacher certification. This timeline is broken down into semesters and years. During the first semester, the novice teacher completes the General Knowledge Test as well as the Subject Area Exam. During the second semester, the novice teacher enrolls in a district ESOL program and submits their application to receive alternative teacher certification. By the end of their first year, the county



recommended that the novice teacher seeking alternative certification enrolls in a professional development reading competency program and participates in the “Summer Survival Program.” In the second year of teaching, the novice teacher must complete the Professional Education exam, participate in the alternative teacher program provided by the school district, and complete an alternative teacher certification portfolio.

If an art teacher chooses to take the temporary certification path first, and then later decides he or she wants to continue teaching, they have the option of moving from a temporary teaching certificate to a professional teaching certificate. In order to advance, the novice art teacher must either: 1.) Take preparation college courses, have teaching experience, demonstrate professional competency in the classroom, and have taken and passed all three Florida teacher certification exams 2.) complete a district alternative teacher program in addition to passing all three state teacher exams, 3.) Complete an Educator Preparation Institute program and pass all three state teacher examinations, 4.) Possess a valid ABCTE certificate and show professional education competence in the classroom, 5.) Complete an approved College Professional Training option for a content area major as well as having teaching experience, being able to show competence in the classroom, and pass all three state teacher examinations, or 6.) Have completed two semesters of successful full- time teaching experience at the university level and have passed the Florida Subject Area (Florida Department of Education, 2006).

### **How I Compared and Contrasted**

I compared and contrasted alternative art teacher certification versus traditional certification using many different techniques. I began this process of investigation by doing a

great deal of research on thorough scholarly publications and I noted the articles most relevant to art education and teacher certification. Following literature review, I wanted to provide an autoethnography, so I used introspection and metacognition to evaluate my education and teaching experiences and how they relate back to the research literature, as well as the present moment. These experiences included a vast array of situations such as: My life as an adolescent, my experience as a college student majoring in art education, growing up, being an artist and becoming an art educator. Once I was finished gathering information, I began comparing and contrasting the research I found regarding art teacher certification, as well as personal experiences.

### **How I Researched**

I researched the topic of art teacher certification using several different methods. This thesis not only contains citations of scholarly research concerning teacher preparation, but it also reveals my experiences so far as an artist, art educator, and my journey to both. I have been keeping a journal since the second grade when my Grandma gave me my first journal. Although my approximate 17 journals would have been wonderful tools for this research project, I do not have access to them, as they are either thrown away or still sitting in the closet at my mom's house, which I have not been to in about two years. This made writing an autoethnography a bit more challenging. Early years were gleaned almost completely from memories and sketchbooks, and recent developments were enhanced by the three journals I do still have, as well as more current sketchbooks.

Once my major professor introduced me to autoethnographies, I was hooked and most certainly wanted to integrate this methodology into my research. I believe introspection is a wonderful form of learning as well as research. Only from reflecting and learning from the past, we can make room to grow in the present.

I have to take a range of steps to research art teacher certification as well as engaging in autoethnography. I have spent much seat time at the computer to gather articles from scholars who have previously discussed this topic. By the time I was done gathering articles, I realized that many of them were not particularly focused on my topic or they were completely relevant to my topic, or were not quite relevant. To begin my proposal, I started with just five articles.

After completing my proposal, I continued researching and updating my references and I continued re-reading through the articles that were relevant to my topic. It was not an easy task. However, I found many useful articles, including ones I received in my art education courses, about art teacher preparation and effective teaching. I saved every article onto my thumb drive, even the ones that I did not end up using, as they may be useful in the future.

Along with collecting articles, I have simultaneously been reading Carolyn Ellis's (2008) book *Revision* to gain more of a comprehensive understanding of how to research and write an autoethnography. I have been revisiting old journal entries to gather information from my past and its relation to the present. I continue to record my observations of other art teachers as far as their classroom productivity in relation to their path of teacher certification, so that I can further discuss my experiences and observations later on in my thesis. Moreover, I continue journaling and taking notes from my experience in my last and final internship and reflecting on them as well.

By doing this, my results began to accumulate. I began to discover exactly what happened that led me to becoming an art educator. Furthermore, I was exposed to much research regarding art teacher certification and the different paths to certification.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Summary of Results from Comparison**

Results from my comparisons of my journey to certification bring several conclusions. Alternative art teacher certification is one way to get certified, but the results of this thesis, including my autoethnography, prove to me that traditional art teacher certification is the most effective route to take. Through my experience in art education, receiving certification through a traditional route is best, as more field experience provides more knowledge, practice in skills, and teacher better preparation.

Published research provided evidence of my point, as well as the opposing side. Although alternative teacher preparation does not provide as much training as a traditional program does, it can have the capacity to create successful art teachers. Other factors can influence the success of art teachers.

It is important to keep in mind the variety of other factors that can go into creating a successful art teacher, such as previous experiences a teacher may have had with children or young adults that could provide insight to their intellectual development, the passion they have to educate students about art, which would inevitably lead them to make excellent lesson plans and projects, a natural determination to teach art, compassion for others, the urge to make a difference, and inherent patience. A person who receives alternative art teacher certification may have some or all of the above qualities and that could increase their potential to become an excellent art teacher.

Following this, events that occurred during adolescents will be discussed. A journey from my adolescents to the more present moment will be explored and explained. Key events, which I believe made a significant impact on my life, will be discussed. Readers will receive insight into my world.

## **Autoethnography**

### The Adolescent Years

"I can't take it anymore, I have to leave, I have to get out of this house away from these people," I whisper frantically on the phone to my high school boyfriend, after being threatened to have my jaw broken by a relative. "Well, if you leave, I am going with you; you are not going alone." I make the decision. At the age of 15, I decide that my only way out of the unbearable chaos that went on in the house I was living in was to run away. I had no plans and no money. With every reason to be, I was quite the young and troubled teenager. All I knew was that I had an unexplainable urge to run and that that urge was just enough to actually do it.

The next day at school I was anxious all day. I wasn't listening to what any of the teachers were saying because I was too busy writing in my journal about what had happened to cause me to take a leap and run away. By the end of the school day, I had written 15 pages. As an adolescent, writing was a form of catharsis (and it still is). Writing was my way of communicating what I was unable to communicate to others. I felt that my journal was the most reliable and dependable thing I had.

I usually walked home after school, but on this specific day, I had my dad pick me up in the neighborhood next to the high school I attended. I was wearing a checkered black and white

skirt that had threads dangling from the bottom where I had cut it. Attached were patches of bands I idolized at the time accompanied with a shirt that read "The Addicts," which was also a band. I wore Converse sneakers that I refused to throw away and my hair was carelessly up in a bun. I always got strange looks from people about my attire, but it didn't bother me.

The plan was for my dad and I to go to a bookstore and spend some time together. Since my parents are divorced, I saw my dad occasionally. I lived with my mom. Little did my dad know my plan was to meet Jack, whom I had met a few months ago, at the bookstore and take the closest bus to escape my life.

My dad dropped me off at the bookstore. He said he was going to run to the grocery store and grab a couple of things and that he would be back shortly. I said ok, then got out of the car and began walking into the bookstore with my stuffed backpack I had brought to school, except that nothing inside of it was school related. I had, what I thought I needed to survive for what I had intended on being a very long time. My heart was racing. "What if he doesn't show up? We have been dating for a few months; I trust him, right?" I walked into the bookstore and began to skim the aisles. He was nowhere to be seen. I began to feel frustrated and disappointed. I also felt somewhat guilty for putting my dad in the middle of this. We always got along really well and he was supportive of me and loved me regardless of my rocky teenage years. But, I knew the only way I could pull this off was to have my dad drop me off.

I kept walking down the aisles, in hopes that I will see him enter the bookstore soon. Suddenly, I hear the entrance door to the bookstore open and I turn my head. "He's here! He actually showed up! This is actually happening...wow," I was thinking to myself with shock and excitement. We hugged each other. He asked me if I was sure I wanted to do this and I said

definitely. I told him my dad was in the shopping plaza at a grocery store and that I was scared he would see us walking out. My only goal at this point was to make it to the bus without being seen. Jack said it was okay and that we would just run to the music store across the street which was right next to the bus stop. He relied on the bus for transportation, so he knew the routes quite well. We still had no idea where we were going at this point and neither of us seemed to care. Our only objective was to successfully escape. We walked out, and once our feet hit the concrete, we ran.

Our first stop was the music store. "I already feel free," I thought with relief. The only person I had told my plan to was my best friend and she promised she wouldn't tell anyone, even though I could tell she was worried about me and I felt sad leaving her with that sort of situation. Jack and I stayed in the music store for about ten minutes looking at all the expensive instruments. I did not want to be there at all because all that was running through my head was getting on the bus, but I knew it was safer to wait a bit to allow my dad to make it to the grocery store before heading to the bus stop.

"Are you ready," he asked me. "Let's go," I replied with a smile. As we are running to the bus stop, we both see in the distance that the bus is already there picking people up. "Come on," he exclaimed. I begin to run faster. My adrenaline was so high at that point I start laughing. We were the last people to enter the bus.

We stumble in, out of breath, pay our fees, and sit. At about 5:00p.m. most of people on the bus look homeless and distraught; yet there we were, two naïve kids who decided to rebel and run away, thinking we could take life on all by ourselves. We had no idea where this journey



was about to take us, but that didn't matter. All that mattered was that I was finally on my own, liberated from everything that was draining me.

We decided to go downtown. In fact, Jack and I had met at a concert downtown. I met him when he had a bright pink mohawk that was about twelve inches tall, accompanied by jeans stained with bleach, a ripped up band shirt, tall black boots, and a bullet belt. He was there often and he knew every street and knew where everything was. He was always a vagabond.

On the first night, we spent the little money we had on Icees from 7-11. We walked around and talked for awhile. Night seemed to fall quickly and we had nowhere to sleep. We were at the lake in the middle of the city and a few feet away from a gazebo. There were people with long hair, a glazed look in their eyes, and big smiles beating on white buckets as if they were drums. "Those people look cool, we should go see if we can stay with them wherever they are," Jack said with excitement. "I don't know," I replied with hesitation. I did not have a good feeling about going with them, so we just ended up watching them for a few more minutes from a distance as they played their tribal sounding music.

Jack said homeless people always slept outside of the church a few blocks away. He said we would be safe there. We walked there and saw no one. Suddenly, we didn't feel so safe. "How about the gazebo," he asked, hoping I would like the idea. "That will be fine," I said with hesitation. We walked back. We sat our backpacks down on the concrete and laid down. It was impossible to get comfortable. Even though it was about 80 degrees outside, the ground was freezing. I recall hardly sleeping at all and shivering most of the night.

We woke up as soon as the sun started to rise. It reminded me of camping; it's very difficult to sleep in because the sun wakes you up with the light and the heat quite early. The only difference was we were not camping, but solely trying to survive on the street.

As we awoke, a security officer spotted us from a distance in the gazebo as soon as we stood up and quickly began approaching us on a bicycle. "Oh no! This is it; we are caught. I'm going to have to go back home," I began to nervously think to myself. "Good morning," the security officer said. "Where are you guys heading?" I was so speechless and nervous that I couldn't respond. I was hoping Jack knew what to say and my hopes were correct. "We are heading to school," he replied with confidence. The security officer, after giving us a look of skepticism, said all right, and then took off. I sighed with relief for two reasons: 1. Because what Jack said worked and 2. That it was a weekday.

On the second day, I decided to call my dad. My brother, who is six years older than me answered. "Are you ok?," he asked, not sounding worried because he ran away when he was my age for the same reasons. "I'm fine; we are downtown."

I spoke to my dad briefly. I apologized for abandoning him the way that I did. I explained my chaotic living conditions at home and I could tell he understood. He told me the police were called and were searching all over the shopping center for me. I felt so bad and kept apologizing to him. He forgave me.

I also called my best friend. She said she missed me and kept asking if I was okay. She asked me if I was going to come back. I told her I didn't want to and that I had no idea what we were going to do. "My money on the pay phone is about to run out. I love you. I'll call you soon." "Ok," she replies.

By the second day, we were starting to feel pretty uncomfortable on the streets. Jack said his friend Erica lived close by and that we could take the bus to her house and “crash there for a few weeks.” I didn’t feel too comfortable with the idea, but it would be more comfortable than sleeping on the hard ground for a second night in a row, so I agreed.

We got on the bus and sat in the back. The air conditioning felt so good, something we weren’t experiencing considering our recent change in living conditions. Our intention was to make a stop at the bank so I could withdraw all the money I had and we could catch a bus to take us out of state. Before doing that, we wanted to sleep at his friend Erica’s house for a few nights and try to create some sort of plan. However, both of these plans fell through. We ended up staying on the bus for 6 hours that day, riding around, taking turns sleeping, as we didn’t sleep the previous night, and enjoying the air conditioner.

We both awoke to see that it was dark outside our bus windows. “This is the last stop,” the bus driver said, looking at us as if he were eager to get home. “What are we going to do?” I asked Jack. “We’ll take another bus back downtown.” And we did.

The second night, we decided not to sleep under the gazebo, as it was out in the open and we didn’t want that security guard to question us again. Jack knew of a bridge in a neighborhood that he thought was very hidden, so we walked there. It was a white bridge with bricks that looked as if they were 100 years old. I could hear the cars passing above us. With nothing but dirt under the bridge, a trail had been created for local residents to walk on.

“Hey,” Jack said. I looked up. He was holding a pencil. “Let’s write our names on the bridge with the date.” I liked the idea, so we did. Afterwards, we threw our backpacks down to use them as pillows. I felt safer there. It was more secluded. We laid down and fell asleep.

Around three o'clock in the morning, I woke up to Jack moaning, in what sounded like excruciating pain. The sound was coming from a distance. Half asleep and alarmed, I stood up. He was nowhere to be seen. A minute later, I saw him stumbling from the distance towards me, grabbing his stomach. "Are you ok?" I say with great concern and worry in my tone. "No, I was just shitting and pissing blood; I don't know what's wrong with me," he says, having to make a great effort just to be able to speak. I felt so scared for him. I had no idea what to do. I was young and had no experience with anything like this before. "We need to take you to the hospital; this seems very serious," I say. "No," Jack says. "If we do that, we'll get caught. I'll be all right. Let's just walk to the gas station about a mile away." We did. I recall having to help him walk as he leaned on me, continuing to experience this mysterious physical pain.

We walked into the gas station and the people who were in there were either purchasing alcohol or were sluggishly walking, half asleep. Jack went to the bathroom. After he came out, he bought some over-the-counter medicine in hopes it would help. Surprisingly, it did. We walked back to the bridge and slept until about eight the next morning.

Early the following morning, I slowly woke up to the sound of footsteps. Jack was still asleep. As soon as I opened my eyes, a tall guy, around the age of 40, wearing a police uniform, made eye contact with me. "Good morning," he said sternly. My heart began to race. Before responding to the officer, I started kicking Jack to wake up. It took him a minute. As soon as his eyes opened, the officer looked at him and said the same thing in the same manner. Jack hesitated, then said hello to the officer. "What are you kids doing here," he asked us assertively. We were speechless. We knew we were caught. There was nothing we could do but run.

Although we didn't communicate it to each other, we both considered running for it, but we didn't try. We both knew that realistically, there was no escaping this.

The officer proceeded to ask us where we live as well as our parents' home phone numbers. I gave him my home address and home telephone number. Jack told the officer the same information. The officer walked away and was talking into his walkie talkie. A person on the other end was responding, but I couldn't understand what she was saying.

"Both of your parents will be here soon," the officer said. He looked up on the wall of the bridge and noticed our names we had written with huge letters and a heart. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a pencil with a fresh eraser. "And you'll be erasing that before you leave," he told us. We did.

I felt like my heart was sinking. I was so scared to go back home, especially after running away. I already knew what would happen. My mom would be absolutely furious. And my assumption was right. My mom was there in about 15 minutes to pick me up. She looked so angry I thought steam was going to come out of her ears. I hugged Jack and got into the car, not knowing when I would see him again.

My best friend and her mom came to my house as soon as I got home. When I opened the front door to greet them, my friend's mom was in tears. I hadn't brushed my teeth in three days. I had leaves and dirt all over the back of my jacket from sleeping in dirt. My hair was so greasy, it looked like I had just showered. My friend's mom began picking the leaves and dirt off of my back and hugged me saying, "I'm so glad you are okay."

After they left and I was alone in my room, I kept thinking about how disappointed I was. "We were so close to getting away from here. What did we do wrong?" I started to feel even

more frustrated when I remembered the people we spotted the first night and how I chose not to talk to them. “What if we would have gone with them? Maybe we would be somewhere else and running away would have worked out the way I wanted it to.”

I began to realize that the bridge we slept under was located in the middle of a neighborhood. Although it was pretty secluded, there was still a path for neighbors to walk on. I came to the conclusion that someone must have been walking early in the morning, spotted us, and called the police out of concern. I felt like my dream was broken. “I’ll just have to leave again,” I thought.

It wasn’t until later in life that I was so thankful for that officer to catch us and take us home. Even though, at the time, being caught by authority was unpleasant and disappointing, dealing with my life was worth it. If that officer had never found us, who knows what would have happened to me and I am glad I never had the chance to find out.

### Completing High school

I grew up in Winter Park, Florida; not the affluent part, but the outskirts. I lived in a standard three bedroom, two bathroom house with my mom and brother. My mom was a single parent working in retail and my dad lived only a few minutes away from us, working at a jewelry store. Growing up with the absence of stability, it took me a long time to get on my feet and get to the point where I finally asked myself, “What am I going to do with my life?”

As a teenager, I was quite reckless. Looking back on it now, I feel that I was just trying to survive and make it out alive. To my surprise, I graduated high school. My junior year of high school, I had a 1.6 GPA. with no desire to go to college. All of my friends would talk about

going to school, asking me where I wanted to go, and I said I didn't want to go. Many people I knew were applying to the university relatively close to where our high school was, while others were applying outside of the Orlando area, and very few were going out of state. I wondered what it must feel like to feel motivated and excited about life. "What does it feel like to know what you want to do and genuinely feel that you have some sort of purpose," I would wonder. At this time in my life, all I was feeling was lost, confused, and depressed.

I had an extreme dislike for school and had no desire to continue my education. The only classes in high school I liked were art classes. I took Photography 1 and 2 with a teacher who was very comical, inspiring, and from New York. I learned about lighting, how to operate a camera, and all of the other essentials one must know to be able to operate a manual camera. By my junior year of high school, I fell in love with photography. "What if I went to college for photography?" I began to ask myself after finally feeling some sort of passion for something in school.

I was also in the painting and drawing classes, which I adored as well. I loved art as therapy more than I loved art as performance. In a way, art provided my opportunity to unleash my deep seated feelings. I was able to lose myself in my work, which was such a great feeling.

By my senior year of high school, I disciplined myself for the first time in years to actually make an effort in school. At this point, I didn't have much of a choice if I wanted to graduate, like all of my other friends were. I made the decision to go to college. I figured, "Why not?" I was fortunate enough to have my entire tuition already paid for. All I had to do was apply,

get accepted, and sign up for classes. The problem was, I graduated high school with a 2.1 GPA and I had a feeling colleges would reject me.

For the sake of it, I applied to a few universities. I was hoping to get lucky and get accepted into a college far away and start a life of my own. I thought my statement letter that described why I wanted to go to college and get a degree in art would make me look good and could possibly explain my terrible high school academic record, but it wasn't enough.

I anticipated responses from all of the universities I applied to. All of the schools were away from my hometown, which was exactly what I wanted. I had wanted to get out of my house for so long and I realized this was the opportunity to do it. I waited and waited. Finally, I got the first reply and it read something like this, "Dear Deanna Price, we thank you for your interest in our school. However, at this time, we are unable to accept your application." I stared at the letter, not too disappointed because I knew the likelihood of getting into a university right away would be a result of pure luck, considering my grades.

### Community College

Soon enough, I decided to start my academic journey at a community college, the only available route at that point. I moved away for my first year of college and attended a community college in Ocala, Florida. At that time, I was seeking a degree in Fine Art. I developed a passionate interest in art and decided that I wanted to be a full time artist. I wanted to make a living as an artist, sell my work, eventually make it big, and be well recognized by the public.



After a year at this college, I no longer liked it and soon returned back to my home town. I transferred to the community college close by. I was still getting my degree in fine art with, hopes for the same objectives to happen.

The college I transferred to was fantastic. The art studio rooms were much more spacious and inspiring in an “artsy” way than those of the previous. With more equipment and diverse coursework, I could grow in ways I never could before. The instructors were incredible when they taught and very humble individuals. What a difference it made to be a pupil of an instructor who genuinely seemed to care about the education of others. I enjoyed being educated by artists who also loved to teach.

At this community college, I met someone who became a great inspiration and love to me, Matthew. We met in a sculpture class, the first art class I took at this community college. My attraction to him seemed instantaneous. I found myself wanting to talk to him, but feeling way too nervous to approach him. We sat at the same table and worked on our sculptures for class, not saying anything to each other at first.

Shortly after the semester had started, one day when class was almost over, he walked over to me and put a CD case in front of me. The inside had a printed cover that read “King Crimson,” which had a very funky face on it. I said thank you and felt very excited to hear what would play out of my speakers in my car. This was the beginning of a relationship that would flourish.

After I overcame my barrier of timidity and we started talking more, I found out that he was also an artist, but had a completely different style and approach to art. While my style was

more loose, sporadic, and intuitive, his work was more precise, figurative, and anatomical. I loved that his style of creating art was so opposite of mine, as it gave us a lot to talk about and we began to learn from each other.

Matthew and I began working as artists together. I would go to his house that sits on five acres of land and we would work in his studio. I would draw or paint and he would sculpt, since that is his specialty. Occasionally we would practice drawing and sculpting each other.

As the time approached when I was about to receive my degree in Fine Art from community college, I was still certain that I wanted to get my bachelor's degree in Fine Art. Why not? I loved art. It was everything to me. Little did I know, I was soon to take a completely different direction.

### The Day that Changed Everything

For me, everything changed on a particular day and I mark this day as one of the largest turning points in my life. I was on my way home from school. I was driving the speed limit in my 2002 red Toyota Corolla car. When I got home, I parked in the driveway as I always did. I grabbed my purple backpack with the large patch on the back which read "Small flowers crack concrete," opened the car door, and began walking to the front door. My mom was at work. She usually worked until 6:00 p.m. on the weekdays, so I always came home with the house to myself.

My mom and I never got along very well. We fought a lot. Even though I lived with her, I didn't know who she was at all and I still don't. Coming home with all the doors abruptly locked and no way to get in was nothing out of the ordinary.

As I am approaching the door, I notice that the door knob had been changed. Instead of being dull and rusted as it always was, it was bright and shiny gold. Perplexed, I turn it. It's locked. I ring the doorbell to make sure my mom is not home. She isn't. I start to feel panicked. This has happened before. My mom has locked me out of the house before with no warning, but never like this. My mom had kicked me out of the house before, but never like this. Frantic, wondering where I am going to go if she kicked me out, I go to the side door, hoping it's open. It's not. No door is open, all the windows are shut, all of my belongings are inside. I have no way of getting anything.

I begin to panic. I call Emily, my best friend since the fifth grade. She tells me I can just come over to her house and we'll talk about what we can do. When I arrive, her mom tells me almost right away that I am more than welcome to live with them. She tells me I should have moved in with them a long time ago. They briefly knew of my living conditions at home and I felt like they understood my situation. So I decided to move in with them and this is what changed my life for the best.

### Turning Point

Living with Emily and her family was something I had never experienced before. Her parents were together, her and her brother were in school, they had two adorable dogs, and her parents truly loved and cared about each other. This was completely different than the environment I grew up. I no longer had to come home to fear. I was finally able to come home and relax, knowing that I would be okay. I felt safe and loved.

Shortly after this, I received my A.A. degree in Fine Art. I had applied to a fine art program in south Florida and got accepted. I was absolutely ecstatic and looking forward to proceeding to that chapter of my life. This had been my dream for so long and it was finally coming true.

About a week before I was supposed to move away and into the dorm I had registered for, doubt began to consume me. I had gone to the orientation, signed up for my classes, met some of the professors, and was ready to make the big move and begin the journey of receiving a degree in fine art. Was this REALLY what I wanted though? “Do I really want to major in fine art? What am I going to do with a fine art degree? I was in no situation where my parents will continue financially supporting me, so how would I make it? Did I really want to pursue something that solely focuses on me? What if I could do something that was rewarding not only to myself, but to many others as well? What about Matt and me? I really love him. Did I want to move two and a half hours away from him? Am I even ready to move away and take on the world all by myself and did I want to pursue art or art education?”

I began to wonder if I should pursue art education. For some time, I had been considering getting my fine art degree then getting certified to teach art in public schools, but did I even know how to teach? I realized early on that I certainly did not. Teaching is much more than standing up and speaking about a topic that interests you. It requires the teacher to know how to effectively communicate to students, spark their interests so they will listen, manage and regulate an art classroom with 20 or more students, be able to use different ways of communicating to students who are gifted, exceptional, and neither of those, implement good organization, know

how to set up a classroom so that students can move around without getting hurt, know what to do when students misbehave, and know how to deal with them in an effective way without yelling, and much, much more. I realized it was something that had to be learned, just like anything else.

The idea of teaching others of the future and possibly making an impression on kids began to appeal to me. How rewarding would it be to know that I made a difference in someone's life? How incredible would it feel to be able to teach kids how to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings by making art? I began to ask myself what happiness is to me. I realized that after I graduate, I will have to fend for myself. How will I do that with an art degree? I won't.

Additionally, Matthew had introduced me to Buddhism, something that greatly influenced me. With a huge focus on altruism, this was another contributing factor that made me want to teach art even more. I began to feel as though I would be much more fulfilled coming home everyday knowing I contributed to society, rather than coming home everyday still spinning in my own ego and head, wondering what MY next piece will be. I started to think, "Why can't I be an artist and an educator at the same time?" and that is what I decided to do.

After a great deal of consideration about the decision that would take me down one path or another, I rejected the fine art program already in place and decided to pursue an art education degree at the nearby university. Since then, I have been both artist and educator. I am going to be completing my senior art teaching internship soon and I hope to get a position as an art teacher right away. I still manage to put my art work in exhibits, produce new pieces, and I take time to

do lessons and keep a self-reflective art teaching journal to monitor my growth and suggestions that I give myself, or that my supervising teacher gives me. Furthermore, by producing this thesis, I continue to do research in art education as well. I also remain up to date with the most recent art education research because it aids me in becoming a better teacher.

### My Path

As an undergraduate student, I will be receiving my bachelor's degree in art education. In my opinion, the art education program at the university I attended is designed in a way that meets all the necessary knowledge, skills, and foundations a teacher must know to be capable of having a successful teaching profession and classroom. Regulating an art classroom requires much more than solely learning how to produce a great work of art. It requires: Knowledge of the stages of development so an art teacher can know what skills and capabilities children have at what ages, familiarity with exceptionalities so an art teacher can make accommodations for students with special needs, a variety of teaching strategies, classroom management, and more. The university I attended provides classes in these initial areas to help art teachers excel to their fullest potential, as well as having art teacher certification by the time of graduation.

My academic background includes an Associate in Arts degree from a local community college in fine art/ studio art. This degree consisted of the general core courses (math, science, English, and government) as well as electives and requirements for the degree in art specifically. The required courses to get an A.A. art degree were: Art History 1 and 2, Drawing 1 and 2, Basic Design 1 and 2, as well as a few art electives. The art electives I chose to take were Painting 1 and Sculpture.

Of all the art courses I took at the community college, sculpture was my favorite. This course was one I cherished the most because I had not done much work with 3-D art before and I ended up loving it. I produced works of art I had no idea I was capable of making. Also, I had an excellent professor. I made three pieces in that class, which involved a great deal of work and complicated processes and layered timelines. The first piece was a mask, the second piece was a low-relief sculpture, which I chose to do of Venus, and the third piece was a bust. The last project, creating a bust, was the most challenging and time-consuming. The details were labor intensive, but I liked that it was so tedious. I probably spent about 60 hours working on it. I was attempting to sculpt my favorite artist: Jean-Michel Basquiat. Although my self-evaluation and reflection of the piece did not end up looking identical to him, it did get into the student show and I won the Dean's Award of Excellence, which was pretty exciting. As artist, it felt like a great accomplishment to win this title.



**Figure 1: *Portrait of A Bust*, Deanna Jean Price, Fall 2008**

Because I had intended on pursuing a fine art degree, I had not taken any education classes during my community college time. When I initially made the decision to pursue art education, I had to take prerequisite classes to get into the program at the university I wished to attend. Therefore, after receiving my associate's degree, I went back to community college to fulfill the requirements I needed in order to get accepted into the art education program at the university. These three classes were: Introduction to the Teaching Profession, Teaching Diverse Populations, Technology for Educators.

Introduction to the Teaching Profession was a course that informed students about the issues and current state of education. This class taught about the nature of teaching, what it is, teaching styles, and it also required a 15 hour field observation. Even though it seemed to be a very simple introduction to the field of education, it was still necessary. At this point, I felt that the prerequisite classes were too simple. I began to wonder if I had made the correct decision about my quick degree change. It wasn't until later, when I began the upper level courses, did I feel that I truly started to learn about the field of education.

Teaching Diverse Populations was a class about diversity. The course taught students about multiculturalism, different nationalities, what stereotyping can do to potentially harm others, and how respecting diverse populations is important. This course also required 15 hours field observations, one of which had to be at a private school that practiced religion. I went to a Catholic school, which was very interesting. It is a great and valuable experience to observe this. A lot was different than what occurred in public school, for example, they prayed before they ate



and had about thirty minutes of bible study daily. This was valuable to see because I learned about education and its diversity.

Technology for Educators was a class about infusing technology in the classroom. This great course provided information and experiences about the variety of applications that can be used in a classroom to enhance learning. I learned how to make a website, how to use Excel, how to use a Smartboard, and more.

Additionally, a few extra lower level art courses were required for the art education degree, so I also took those at the community college. These classes were: Photography 1, Ceramics 1, and Printmaking 1.

Photography 1 was the most challenging art course I took as an undergraduate student; even more so than the upper level art courses I took. This class required a great deal of critical thinking and observation. I recall sometimes spending hours in the darkroom, completely losing track of time; I was so immersed in the assignments. For each project, we had to take anywhere from about 40-75 photographs, only to select our best 5 to turn in.

During the critiques, which is when art work is analyzed and a decision is made about the objective of the piece, the teacher would have us describe the facts of each piece, analyze the elements of each photograph, find personal meaning to the series of works, then come to a conclusion by evaluating the series of works. I thought the way the professor critiqued was the most effective way to critique art work. I was so used to hearing people state their subjective opinion and I always felt that that did not encompass a complete evaluation or constitute full meaning of a work. Later in my academic career, while taking the course Teaching Art History

and Criticism, I found out this method of critiquing had a name, Feldman's Method. Feldman's method appealed to me and informs me as an art educator because it is a methodic way of critiquing work that, in my opinion, encompasses everything which is needed to evaluate works of art.

Additionally, Ceramics was a very satisfying course as well. The professor I had was the same professor I had for Sculpture and he was very humble and it was apparent he intended the best for all his students; he thoroughly enjoyed teaching, was passionate about what he did, and was very helpful when assistance was needed. This later inspired me after reflecting on his teaching approaches and realizing that that is the kind of art educator I wish to be. I learned about clay, different firing methods, different sorts of glazes, many techniques, and completed the class having produced many proud pieces of art.

The courses entitled Relief Printing came as a surprise to me. I had no idea what to expect. I had never done any sort of printmaking. However, I was exhilarated to try a new art form. The first assignment we had was to create a design out of our initials, transfer it to soap, carve it away, roll ink onto the soap, and make prints. It worked like a stamp. I later ended up using this assignment as a model for one of my lesson plans for my first art teaching internship, and the grade students absolutely loved it. The printmaking piece I enjoyed the most was one where we had to divide our linoleum square into two pieces, but the two pieces had to create one image. I used an image from the riots that had been going on in Egypt. The image was a man who was kneeling down with horror on his face. On the other piece a guy behind him had an object poised to hit the crouched man with a bat, and was about to hit him with. It wasn't so

much the riot itself that caught my attention in this photograph, but it was the raw emotional state the photograph projected.



**Figure 2: *Untitled*, Deanna Jean Price, 2011**

My upper level courses were mostly courses in the field of education. 1) Teaching Strategies and Classroom Management, Learning Theory and Assessment, an ethics, legal, and safety class, theory and practice teaching ESOL students, content reading grades K-12, Teaching Art Appreciation and Criticism, Teaching Art in the Elementary School, Teaching Art in the Secondary School, Art for Exceptionalities, three additional art courses and two teaching internships.

Teaching Strategies and Classroom Management, in my opinion, is one of the most important courses for the art education degree. This class is about ways to manage a classroom in effective ways. With 20-35 or more students in an art classroom, most teachers certainly require knowledge of classroom management. This course taught me extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, procedures to discipline students, how to create a resume, ways to get students' attention if they are off task, a variety of graphic organizers that can be used in the classroom, rewards for positive behavior, and ways to reduce teacher lecture and increase student tasks.

Learning Theory and Assessment provided the theories of education as well as educational theorists such as Piaget, Gardner, Vygotsky, and more. This course taught me how to assess students fairly and properly. Furthermore, it taught me the stages of development, learning techniques such as think pair, share, and included a tutoring component where everyone from the class was assigned to a school to tutor a student in reading. As an art educator, I began to take these methods developed by theorists and think about ways to incorporate them into the art room.

The Ethics, legal, and safety course I took was an online course. Even though the course was online, I still learned about ethics in public schools in Florida as well as a variety of national importance for the teaching profession. This course was valuable because each student in the class led a discussion online at least once covering a court case and or topic. We debated and expressed our opinions on a variety of ethical dilemmas, stating whether or not we believed they were ethical. After this course, I was quite surprised at all of the ethical dilemmas that can occur in the classroom. Prior to this course, it did not occur to me that ethical issues could occur in the art room.

Theory and practice teaching ESOL students was quite a valuable class. Prior to taking this class, I had no idea that English language learners were categorized into different groups according to fluency. These categories assisted me in understanding the different levels of fluency that students are at. Furthermore, I learned effective ways of communicating with students that are from overseas and either know only a bit of English or no English at all. I learned about gesturing, eye contact, visuals, pointing when explaining, and speaking slower.

Content Area reading for grades K-12 placed emphasis on the importance of integrating reading and writing into the classroom regardless of the subject you teach. As an art teacher, I had never thought I would be reading to students, as well as having them read. After taking this class, however, my mind had changed. I have every intention on integrating reading and writing into my art class. Since I am hoping to get a job at an elementary school, I have already starting buying books I believe students in grades K-5 will find motivating, stimulating, and enjoyable. This course taught me exciting ways to get students involved in reading as well as assignments that will spark their interest and inspire them.

Teaching Art Appreciation and Criticism was a very riveting class. I learned about several different approaches to critiquing works of art, including the Feldman Method, which I intend on using for every critique I have in my future classroom. When I took Photography I at the community college, the professor used Feldman's Method which uses very interesting and effective way of having the class critique each student's piece. Teaching Art Appreciating and Criticism taught me the various criticism theories. Now I had a label for the critiques I had earlier admired. Her critiques were not solely subjective, but rather, started out objectively,

ending with subjectivity. I learned that this method is a very well recognized method, the Feldman Method. I never liked the way many art professors would solely focus on their opinions as well as other students' opinions when critiquing art. I was so glad to know that methods were invented that required higher order thinking, brainstorming, and critical thinking.

Furthermore, this course taught me the importance of integrating art history and appreciation into art classes regardless of grade level, whether it be elementary, middle or high school. Teaching students how to appreciate art, have a historical context, and dissect work is momentous. I knew this class was teaching strategies and principles of art education that I would be using every day as an art teacher. This course provided the training I needed to understand these concepts and the importance of using them in the art room; something that may not have been discovered had I not taken the traditional route to art teacher certification.

Teaching Art in the Elementary says it all. In this class, we read articles relevant to teaching art and the elementary school. We reflected on these articles by giving presentations to the class as well as writing our reflections about the articles. Moreover, the class had two field observation components, each four hours each, of observing art teachers. The last assignment for this course was to create five lessons that could be used for elementary art students. Each student in this course shared their lessons with the class, giving other students ideas for lessons as well.

Teaching art in the Secondary School was structured in a similar way to teaching Art in the Elementary School except that it was geared towards teaching art to students in high school and middle school. All of the articles were relevant to teaching these particular grade levels. We wrote reflections on the articles and gave presentations on the articles.

Furthermore, we were required to do field observations at secondary schools, which was a very valuable experience. At the high school I attended, I observed four different art teachers. This experience was interesting because a couple of the art teachers were actually trying to discourage me from continuing to pursue an art education degree, telling me that art has no future in art in schools. One teacher actually asked me why on earth I was going into education, considering the “direction it’s headed in.” My response was, “Because I love education and I love art.” His words did worry me, but I didn’t let it get to me. With every profession, there are pros and cons and I just kept this in mind as I was listening to his negative remarks.

This observation taught me that in every field, there will always be a few people who are negative and appear to have difficulty finding the positive in things. At this point in my academic career, I recognized my passion for art education and was not going to let anyone tell me otherwise, regardless of the politics that occur in public schools and education. My objective as an art educator is to teach students about art and the importance of it, not to dwell on the flux of political changes in the education system.

Art for Exceptionalities taught me that just because a student may have exceptionality, it does not at all mean they cannot create meaningful works of art. Prior to taking this class, I was not familiar with exceptionalities. With no experience, it was never something I considered. Additionally, I was using the term “disability,” and didn’t really think twice when people used the word “retarded.” After taking this course, I became very open-minded about exceptionalities and do not ever use the word disability or retarded to describe a person with an exceptionality, as I believe they are offensive and degrading words. As an art teacher, being comfortable is

essential around students with exceptionalities and know how to include them in your classroom. I believe that many people may be unaccustomed to people who have an exceptionality, or perhaps do not know how to act around a person with an exceptionality. The fact of the matter is, they are people too and just because a person may not socialize in a way that people who do not have an exceptionality do; however, this does not mean they are incapable of making art. If anything, art provides a great avenue for them to express themselves and what they are thinking.

The first art course I took during my years at the university was a slight disappointment. This very independent class left students to create whatever they wanted; however, because I was getting a degree in art education and had taken courses about teaching art, I found myself becoming more and more critical about the way teachers teach art, including professors. I felt so strongly that having a rubric and structured critiques were essential to have a successful art class.

What I did like about this course was that by the time I completed it, I had completed many paintings. Furthermore, I discovered my love for watercolors. Additionally, I enjoyed seeing other art work produced by students and also learned what I would do differently as an art teacher, such as having more thorough critiques and creating some sort of rubric for grading artwork.

What was lacking, I realized, was a structure for grading and critiques, something I had learned and began to cherish in the art education classes I took. In this course, however, our grades were based entirely on the professor's subjectivity. If the professor did not like or approve a student's work, they had to rework it or do another one. I felt quite lost in this class, as I felt that I never received sufficient feedback. Regardless, my experiences gained in this class became



valuable, as it began to reveal that I would be an art teacher who provided more structure and detailed rubrics.

The second course was another upper level elective art course. We only had 2 projects the entire semester, which I liked because it gave a lot of time to work on it and perfect it. We were allowed to use any medium we wanted, with the professor's approval.

The first project I decided to do was a stop animation. I had experimented with stop animation before and loved it, so I decided to try it again. I took over a thousand photographs of the process of creating a series of drawings, which depicted people from my childhood and surroundings I experienced. The piece included a total of 4 drawings, which took about 1,500 photographs to make, and the video ended up being roughly 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

I recall being very nervous on the day of the critique. Only one other person did a stop animation, which was nothing like the one I did. I had no idea what to expect from my professor. The drawings I did were personal and I wondered if I were revealing too much, since I have never intentionally focused on past experiences to create art before. The music I chose to accompany the animation was quite obscure and I felt nervous to know that everyone's eyes would be on the screen with my video playing, accompanied by the eerie and distant music.

As my video played, I kept thinking how long the video felt, even though it wasn't long at all. Reflecting back on this experience, I believe I was so nervous because I had no idea what to expect, nor did I feel entirely accepted by my professor and her art students, all of whom seemed to know each other well. Only one other girl was also majoring art education, a field that

some art professors looked down upon or to be a joke. In reality, the art educators taught them about art in the first place, which I find to be amusing.

When my video ended, my professor said only a few words about my piece. One scene included a guy who was standing with bars that covered the scene, which was symbolic of imprisonment. My professor's reaction was, "Aww that's cute," which was very disappointing and frustrating, considering the large story behind that image I created. That was about the only feedback I got from her.

For the second and final art project, I decided to do a huge drawing of Narcissus, using brightly colored pastels. I did a rendition of Narcissus that another artist had done. When approaching my professor with the idea, her reply went something like this, "Oh, I don't know if you should try that. I don't want your piece to end in disaster. I wouldn't use your imagination if I were you. See here (she walks me around the painting studio to show me paintings her students had done that looked so realistic they could have been mistaken as photographs), my students work very hard and it takes a long time to get to where they are. I would do something simple, maybe portraits. Maybe you could do several faces on a big sheet of paper; that would look cool."

I was absolutely dumbfounded. An art professor was telling me that I should not try and accomplish my personal goal, but rather, should do what she wants me to do? An art professor, someone who took years of school in art, was telling me not to use my imagination? Isn't that what art is all about? Feeling very discouraged at first, I sort of nodded my head at her answer, and walked away angry and perplexed.

After time to think, I decided to stick with my original idea. It was my piece anyway, wasn't it? It was something I really wanted to do and if it didn't turn out completely realistic, as she implied that it should, I didn't mind at all. Realism wasn't my forte to begin with, and I wanted to challenge myself and try something different. So I did.

I worked and worked on the piece until it was complete. It was about 40" x 30". I took it to a local art store and had a gold mat put around my picture. I thought it looked great. Sure the anatomy was not completely accurate, but most of the work I do is abstract and automatic. I was excited to stand back and look at the brightly colored pastels shining proudly in my portrait of narcissus.



**Figure 3: *Rendition of Narcissus*, Deanna Jean Price, Fall 2010**

The day of the critique, nervousness began to consume me once again. The professor I had in this course specifically told me NOT to do this piece and follow through with this idea. The TA, on the other hand, had told me she liked my piece a great deal.

My name was called, and I stood up. I walked my piece to the window and propped it up so everyone could see. In front of me was a long, narrow rectangular wooden table surrounded by art students and the art professor. Comments begin to approach my ears, “I like the way you used the colors,” “I like the rocks,” “The anatomy is really off, I think it would look much better if you fixed the angle of the back.” My professor sat back with her pointer finger against her lip, nodding slowly at the feedback I was getting from my peers. She speaks next, “The penis is too small,” she says in a serious tone. I immediately started laughing. “Is she kidding?,” I asked myself in my head. She wasn’t. She was absolutely serious. I stopped laughing after I realized I was the only one who found it humorous, other than the other girl who was also in art education and had a similar perspective about the way the class was constructed.

The art professor told me I needed to make the penis bigger. She told me for the final critique, that was what I needed to do and that I needed to fix the back. However, in my eyes, my piece was complete. I matted it. It was done.

I ended up leaving the piece the way it was for the final critique. I stood up the same as I did before, propped my piece up, and waited for the negative remarks. This time, however, I disregarded them. I liked what I did and that was all that mattered. I realized that the critiques were entirely subjective. At this point, I truly realized that art is something different to everyone and that no “right” or “wrong” way can be mandated to make a piece.

Although it was very difficult to make it through this course, I learned so much. I learned that when I become an art teacher, I would use the Feldman method of critiquing artwork rather than solely focusing on opinions. This course taught me about professionalism and what you should and should not do and say when interacting with students, whether it's at the college level or in an elementary school. Furthermore, I learned that giving some sort of praise about work and recommend suggestions rather than being critical and trying to be the artist of another artist's work is much more effective.

The last art course I took was identical to the first one; wherein we were free to do what we wanted. It was very independent and I got my own, personal studio space which was exciting. However, the lack of direction and guidance was disappointing. Once a week, we would have a critique and like the other course, this critique focused on the professor's opinion as well of that of the other students. I felt and observed a huge lack of instruction and effective feedback, but again, it helped to ensure the way I wanted my art class to be and solidify my future behavior and expectations as an art teacher.

My first teaching internship was an incredible experience. Two days a week, I reported to a middle school and observed and assisted the art teacher during school hours. I taught a total of three lessons and all were successful. "It's one thing to learn how to teach and it's another to apply everything you have learned in the classroom," I found myself thinking. My three lessons taught me to never underestimate the potential that kids have to produce art work. Moreover, it taught me being organized and knowing how to manage a classroom is the key to success.

During my second internship, which I am still currently in, I report daily, five days a week to assist the art teacher and teach lessons, one in which alternatively certified candidates would not participate in. In my experience, this has been the most valuable component of my degree. I always felt that classroom management was the most important aspect of the classroom, but felt it would also be the most challenging aspect. My supervising teacher is excellent at gaining student attention and dealing with negative behavior immediately. I have been taking notes on key phrases she uses as well as non-verbal clues she uses to manage behavior problems, so that when I have my own classroom, I will know exactly what to do when dealing with classroom management issues or an unexpected situation.

In addition to classroom management, this internship is also teaching me to work with varying exceptionalities. Not only do you need to accommodate students with exceptionalities, but each student must be accommodated in a different way that meets their specific needs. Exactly the way of communicating with one student may not at all work for another. In my opinion, time needs to be taken to get to know these students, especially so as to develop a plan of action for what works and doesn't work when trying to communicate with them and to support and develop their artistic talents.

### My Reflection

Overall, reflecting on my past experiences at this point in my life is quite interesting. As an adolescent, I never would have dreamed that I would be where I am today, an art educator. Growing up was not easy and in a way, I feel that I had to grow up faster than other people I

knew. I had been through turmoil and the slow process of coming out of it was almost like being reborn.

Despite my rocky childhood and adolescence, two people invested in me and I spent much of my time with growing up: my grandparents. My mom worked when I was a child, so I spent lots of time with my grandma and grandpa. My mom would get up at 7:00 am, get ready for work, and I was at my grandparents' house at about 8:00am and would be there until about 6:00pm. Once I began elementary school, my granddad would pick me up in his large, silver, Cadillac and we would go back to his and my grandma's house until my mom was out of work. It wasn't until I got much older that I realized how much of an impact my grandma had on me.

She taught at a Montessori school for thirty years and was incredible with kids. I can remember the way she talked to me, comforted me, and constantly said, especially in the midst of rough times, "You're going to have a great future, just you wait." I can remember how comments such as these made me feel as a kid. It was so nice to hear and truly believe that what she was saying was true.

During college, when I began to question the fine art degree I was originally pursuing, I began to reflect back on my childhood and teenage years. A huge unfortunate realization dawned on me; it was brought to my attention that there are so many kids who must experience unfortunate circumstances such as watching their parents get divorced, witnessing domestic violence, perhaps one of their parents are in jail, maybe they have never even met their parents, or they could be homeless. These thoughts began to bother me and I started to think about my

grandma and how much of a positive impact she had on me and what a difference it made on my mind growing up.

Soon enough, I started to think about kids in these situations and the positive effect creating works of art could have on them. I began to remember what it felt like to feel fear as a child. As a kid, you do not have any control on your environment. Things happen and you just ride through it. I kept remembering my grandmother and even though she was only one person, that was all it took to make such a positive impact on my young mind, giving me so much hope for the future.

I hope to be that one positive, hopeful influence on a child. With every student I have, I try to find at least one positive thing to say about their artwork, even if they are in a mad rush to get it done due to a lack of interest in art. For the students who say they aren't artists, I tell them I never used to be able to draw and that I had to take drawing classes to learn. I tell them that just like anything else in life, being an artist takes determination and practice to improve and get better. I tell students to never say, "I can't," because even if they feel like they *can't*, if they start to tell themselves they *can*, then they will find a way. I create lesson plans that allow them to express themselves and think critically by asking many higher order thinking questions, as well as giving them many options for the content they can include in their art.

In writing this autoethnography, I reflect on what it might look like if I had gone the alternative certification path and I feel that I would be an art teacher more familiar with art than teaching. I believe that the best way to become an art teacher is to go the traditional route just as I did: a Bachelor's degree in art education. By taking this route, I was slowly introduced to the



profession by observing art teachers, gradually moving to more hands-on experience, and now I am completing my final full time art teaching internship working with students in a supported, supervised experience. I believe that learning about different ways of teaching, children's psychological development, different art mediums, what it is like to teach art to both secondary and elementary students and exceptional students, and ELL considerations are crucial. Getting an art education degree, I learned and applied all of these.

As an art educator, I wish to instill positive feedback and comments to students in hopes that if they are going through a rocky childhood like I did, that they may grow up and remember the art teacher they had who always believed in them. I believe as teachers, we have the ability to inspire and create hope for students coming from a variety of backgrounds. I believe art is one of the most important subjects for all students. Art gives them the opportunity to completely express themselves. As an art educator, my objective is to teach young students how to think for themselves and express themselves. I hope that one day, when my students are older, they can say that I inspired them and taught them to always shoot for the stars, just like my grandmother did.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **Discussion**

In the state of Florida, many different routes can be taken to attain art teacher certification: The traditional path or the alternative certification path. After doing research on both paths, I still have the strong belief that taking the traditional path is the best way to receive art teacher certification. An art teacher who receives alternative teacher certification can be successful, but I believe the preservice teacher who spent four years in their undergraduate degree getting prepared to teach that will have potential to be the most successful.

### **Implications for Art Education**

As an artist, educator, and researcher, from everything I have gathered thus far on art teacher certification, my opinion is it is best for people to be traditionally certified. If a person does choose to receive alternative art teacher certification, I believe some of the best experience they can get that will help prepare them to be an art teacher is the field experiences and volunteer hours I had. These individuals could perhaps request to be volunteers with an art teacher at their local public school. This way, they can begin teaching and assisting.

### **Recommendations**

With the subject of art teacher preparation and the optional paths individuals can take, I provide recommendations for both alternative art teacher preparation programs and traditional art teacher preparation programs. Both of these paths have the potential to produce successful art teachers, but the alternative route relies on individual's level of commitment to the profession.

In the case of alternative certification for art teacher preparation programs, the same requirements for traditional paths should be required, but perhaps, not as long and intensive. For example, those participating in alternative art teacher certification programs should be required to complete at least one internship as well as few observations. The internship could be a month long, rather than the length of an entire academic semester, giving the novice art teacher hands-on experience.

Also, I do not think that people should be allowed to teach prior to receiving certification. I believe they at least need a certain amount of supervised teaching experience with students. As I mentioned, in my experience, I learned the most when I got into my internships. The courses required for the art education degree taught me so much; however, the classroom is where you get to apply everything you have learned in real life situations, then the learning a part of who you are as an art teacher.

With the traditional path, I believe more supervised experience needs to be incorporated into the degree. Perhaps observations could include assisting the art teacher during a lesson so that novice teachers can get the experience of interacting with students, motivating, and managing students. Since many of the observations I did were four hours at one school, maybe for the first two hours the observer could observe the teacher then the last 2 hours they could assist the teacher and students, starting them with hands on experience that will deepen as they develop in the field of education.

This would require planning from the participating teacher, but maybe some way, it would be an optional choice for teachers to participate in these observations. Perhaps a mass e-

mail could be sent out to schools and teachers, asking them if they are willing to participate in these “Active Observations.” Certain counties could be selected to participate and if art teachers agree, a list could be provided to college students letting them know who is willing to let them observe and do *active observations*. Doing this would also eliminate the stress some students have had, including myself, in trying to find a teacher that will even let you observe their class room in the first place. All of the schools and participating teachers would already be known. The only thing left would be to set up a day and time for the art education students to arrive.

For both the traditional and alternative art certification programs, I believe an additional course on competency could be included about organizing the art room and materials. For example, during my internship, I have already learned that children at different ages levels are capable of doing different things. For one assignment, my supervising teachers had kindergarteners paint with watercolors. If they would have attempted to pick up their paintings and carry them themselves to the drying rack, the watercolor may begin to drip on the floor because the students are too young to understand the concept that that would happen if the paper was held a certain way. Kindergarteners tend to use so much water when painting with watercolor. This course could offer procedures for setting up materials, putting them away, storing art supplies, what children are capable of doing at certain age levels, putting finished art work away, and storing partially completed art work.

Furthermore, another recommendation I have for both the traditional and alternative certification programs is that they require novice teachers to keep a self- reflective journal. During my senior art teaching internship that I started one and it has been a very valuable tool. In

my art teacher journal, I record situations that have happened while I was teaching; I describe exactly how I handled the situation. Then, under it, I write “WISHD” which stands for *what I should have done*. In this section, I write advice that my supervising teacher gives me after discussing the situation with her or I come up with a solution myself when I have time to think and do not have to make an immediate decision. Through my self-reflective journal, I also record something I call TIP, which is where I write tips I believe every art teacher can use daily. These may be ideas that come to me randomly or they may arrive from a problem I personally experience in the classroom. I write something I call OFT, which stands for *observations from the teacher*. In this section, I write what I see my supervising teacher do that I want to integrate into my own art teaching practice.

I record in my self-reflective art teaching journal daily. Everyday, it seems that an unpredictable situation occurs and occasionally I will wish I would have handled the situation differently. Sometimes there are situations where I feel like I am lost and have no idea what to do. This is where this journal comes in handy. Keeping this sort of journal is extremely helpful. It gives new art teachers (and existing art teachers) the chance to record what happens so they can review it and know what to do if it happens again in the future, or if something similar happens. This tool is especially useful for those that are visual learners.

In addition to the Art for Exceptionalities course offered at the university I attend, I believe a second class should be dedicated to teaching about students with exceptionalities. Each student with an exceptionality is accommodated in different ways. Art teachers need to understand this and know how to accommodate these students. I believe this course should

incorporate the varying exceptionalities and alongside effective methods for accommodating these students.

For example, during my last internship, when I was giving a Power Point presentation, a student who had an exceptionality began punching himself repeatedly in the face. I had about thirty first graders sitting in front of me and I became instantly concerned about this student. I stopped the presentation and asked him to stop because I was worried he might hurt himself. He continued and when my supervising teacher came over and sat next to him, he stopped.

After this incident, I asked my supervising teacher what she would have done. She said that similar incidents have happened and she gives them a task to do. For example, she may say, “Oh! I forgot to fill ten water cups; can you do that for me?” Even if water cups are not needed, it gives him something to do.

Another effective strategy is to take a long piece of string and make several knots. If something happens, like the incident above, she will ask the student to try and undo the knots. She says this has worked very well with students who have anger problems.

As I mentioned, however, each student requires different accommodations. What works for one student may not work for another. I believe it is very important to give new art teachers more experience and education when it comes to students who have exceptionalities so they will be prepared.

## What I Have Learned

After completing research in regards to art teacher certification and using introspection as a form of research, I do still believe that when it comes to getting certified to teach art, getting a traditional art education degree is best. What did change, however, is my previous belief that the traditional route is the *only way* one can be a successful art teacher. After reading dozens of articles and reflecting back on art teachers I have observed, I see the possibility for art teachers who received alternative teacher certification to have a successful art class. Certainly, a variety of factors contribute to an art teacher being successful other than their path to teacher certification. However, for me, this autoethnography has reaffirmed that it was best to get a degree in art education.

From this experience, I have developed a strong belief that teaching is something that is learned; not an inherent trait. Regardless of which path one chooses to gain art teacher certification, each person is, will be, or has learned briefly about classroom management, how to teach art, and more. However, I feel that an art education degree is the best way to receive art teacher certification.

Getting an art education degree takes four years; whereas, getting alternatively certified can take less than a year. My current supervising teacher, who has been an art teacher for about six years, as well as many other teachers, say that teaching is developmental and that they are *still* working on improving their art teaching. How much experience can one get in a year if teaching, in general, is a profession where growth and improvement is necessary? I like to think about it like this: When one gets a degree in art education, required classes improve our teaching

repertoire. Nearly all of the upper level classes are education foundation classes, such as classroom management and learning theory and assessment. Some of the classes are art education classes such as Teaching Art Appreciation and Criticism and Art in the Elementary School. Each of these classes takes one semester to complete, with field experience embedded within, which is about four months. This means that art teachers who receive their certification via the traditional route receive at least four months of training in each area whereas those who are alternatively certified may spend only a few weeks or less in each or only some of these areas.

I knew nothing about teaching art prior to beginning the process of pursuing an art education degree. Knowing how to make art is one thing, but knowing how to make art, teach others how to make art, manage up to 35 students at once, and helping them make art is not inherent. Personally, I do not believe I could be much of a successful art teacher had I done what I was originally going to do, which was get a fine art degree, then teach art. Art education and learning how to teach is indeed an art in itself. Just like art or any other area of interest, it requires much time, patience, and practice to become proficient and skilled.

I hope that the research and autoethnography I did can give some sort of clarity and insight to those seeking answers about art education and the variety of paths to certification. My wish is that the personal experiences I shared can enlighten novice art teachers about teaching art and inspiring students. Additionally, I hope to motivate those who may have had doubts about pursuing higher education especially if debating whether or not they should pursue fine art or art education, and know that regardless of the past, all you have is now. Change is always possible. Growth has happened through all the changes that occurred in my life, pleasant and unpleasant,



determination to overcome my past and move on, and passion for art education. All of this has led me to the fulfilling position I am in now: To educate future generations through art education.

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