

Mentor's Introduction

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mentor's introduction

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One day, several years ago, Jeanie Auseon came to see me to inquire about pursuing graduate work and teacher certification in art education. Her richly varied background in interior design, educational counseling, and community cultural affairs set her apart from other entering graduate students. While I considered Jeanie's background to be an invaluable asset to the field of art education, Jeanie was uncertain of her own ability to succeed as an art educator. It is perhaps out of this uncertainty that Jeanie has become a keen observer of how others enter and succeed in the field.

Today, Jeanie is regarded as an exceptional art teacher by her students, the classroom teachers at the elementary school in which she continues to teach part-time, other art teachers in the school district, the school administrators who have come to count on Jeanie's outstanding teaching and leadership abilities, and the parents of the elementary students she teaches. These accolades are echoed on campus where Jeanie has made outstanding contributions in the teaching of curriculum design and art classroom practices to preservice elementary teachers and art education majors.

Despite her personal success, Jeanie continues to ask questions about what makes someone a good art teacher. She asks why some preservice teachers go on to become better teachers with each year of experience, while others do not. Many of Jeanie's questions have focused on curricular issues, such as:

- Where do the ideas originate that preservice art teachers use in designing units of art instruction?
- What drives a preservice teacher's decision to use particular artworks in their teaching as opposed to other works of art?
- How do these novice teachers plan to introduce works of art to their students?
- What linkages do student teachers make between the study of artworks and the studio component of their lessons?

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These are only a few of the questions that led Jeanie to ask about the nature of a teacher's pedagogical and content knowledge. If teaching and learning are bound by a teacher's personal knowledge, then it is essential to assess any causes for that knowledge to be lacking. Jeanie responds to this problem by asking why preservice art teachers experience problems when they attempt to construct lesson plans. Her intent is to discover some of the prevalent misunderstandings novice teachers may have about art and art learning so that she can make recommendations for improving teacher preparation in art.

Jeanie is exceptionally well qualified to undertake this important research problem. Her personal history in the field suggests that she will bring valuable insights from the classroom to the interpretation of her findings, and she will discover ways to broadly disseminate her results. I can also envision Jeanie taking full advantage of any opportunity to apply the findings so that anyone entering the art teaching profession under her mentorship will achieve new standards of excellence as novice teachers.