

# Applications of Arts Education

The newsletter for Vermont's Visual and Performing Arts Educators and supporters

November 2020

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## Welcome to the 2020-2021 School Year

We are well into a school year full of new challenges and unexplored contexts, a year during which I believe arts educators can take the driver's seat and navigate systems to more innovative and personal learning experiences for all students. I am eager to start highlighting arts education's role in 21st century learning through this newsletter, while also showcasing the work of teachers as they continue to support students' development as learners and citizens.

New to the Arts Specialist role, I will start by introducing myself. I moved to central Vermont last spring from Nashville, Tennessee where I worked as a PD coordinator for art educators, focusing on literacy integration and inquiry-based approaches in art instruction. I also served as a Gifted and Talented (GT) resource teacher, a role for which I oversaw a middle school's GT program and provided professional learning for all content teachers. Prior to these roles, I was an art teacher in Nashville, TN and Fairfax, VA. Though my background as a professional educator is in the visual arts, I believe all arts disciplines are essential in and out of school. I aim to demonstrate the value of arts education in my work, and I look forward to using this newsletter to showcase how Vermont's visual and performing arts educators do the same.

## At the Core of Progress: Engender Change with the Arts

Despite continued calls for equitable education, biases, prejudices, and racism remain endemic in schools across the country (Boutte, 2016; Milner, 2017). The root of the pervasive injustices against racially minoritized groups is not only framed in systemic racism and implicit bias, but also in the prevalence of Eurocentrism, systemic disadvantages, and limited cultural representation (Adams & Bell, 2016; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). Schools are not exempt from these injustices. Anti-racist teaching practices are being brought to the forefront of conversations surrounding equity and the fight against systemic racism, biases, and prejudices. As with many initiatives that aim to reform and add value to the education system, the visual and performing arts are at the core of anti-racist teaching and social justice education. Intentionally designing arts education that supports a critical and sociopolitical consciousness is essential as we continue to fight for progress, with education serving as the key contributor to real change. This issue, therefore, focuses on arts education's role in anti-racist teaching and social justice education. Included are resources, approaches, and perspectives from experts and educators across the country aimed to support arts and non-arts educators in their efforts to integrate social justice education and anti-racist teaching.

## The Anti-Racist Art Teachers Workshops

### About the Group

The Anti-Racist Art Teachers are a group of K-12 visual art teachers from all over the country who collaborate to compile and develop resources that support educators in their efforts to remove biases, stereotypes, and false narratives in art education. Their site, [Antiracistartteachers.org](http://Antiracistartteachers.org), houses resources and strategies to address implicit biases in the art room, understand cultural appropriation, and ensure racial and cultural representation in artworks and artists' stories. Paula Liz is the founding member, contributor, and original creator of the Anti-Racist Art Teachers group and site. She started the project in response to ongoing questionable comments on art teacher social media groups of which she took part to connect with other teachers as COVID closed schools. In response to conversations happening on arts education social media pages, Paula Liz "realized that most educators are not ill-intended, just ill-informed." She, therefore, took the initiative to tackle these concerns and develop the Anti-Racist Art Teachers group and site, using the question "How can we encourage art teachers to start having a dialogue about these issues?" to frame their work.

### The Vermont Art Educators Association and The Anti-Racist Art Teachers Workshops

In their own efforts to make progress in education and support anti-racist teaching practices, visual art teachers from across the state participated in a series of workshops, hosted by the Vermont Art Educators Association (VAEA) and developed by the Anti-Racist Art Teachers. The workshops had an overwhelming turnout. "I'm really glad that we're getting as many participants for this as we have had at our fall conference," said Lisa Bresler, Vermont art teacher and president of VAEA. "These are about getting the conversations started so that our educators can begin to think about their own work and start to reframe and rethink their curriculum. The workshops emphasize how this should be sewn in throughout your curriculum. It should be in everything we do." In a discipline anchored in student exploration of their multi-faceted identity, embedded anti-racist teaching is critical. As Paula Liz suggests, anti-racist teaching in the art room encourages students to "think about their own positionality" and consider how it "impacts the way that [they] view the world and how the world views [them]." Vermont art teachers continue to recognize the power that the arts can have as they actively find ways to engender change through art education.

### Music for Change

"Does music create social change? Or does it reflect it?"; a thought-provoking question that can quickly lend itself to a powerful music integrated learning experience. Steve Armstrong, CT DOE Social Studies specialist, posed this question as he shared his thoughts on content for his [Northeast Regional Conference for the Social Studies](#) presentation *From Labor Songs to Black Lives Matter: Protest Songs and the American Protest Movement*. The arts have long served as a tool to engender change. As Steve suggests, music provides added insight into the historic and cultural perceptions of the public: "If you're reading speeches or books, the perspective is probably from leaders. If you listen to popular music, you hear another perspective." In other words, music can serve as a primary source for the thoughts and feelings of the public.

## Music for Change Cont'd

Music has a prominent place in social justice education and advocacy. Importantly, musical expression allows students to explore and appreciate diverse perspectives while gaining a sense of historic and cultural context of social justice movements. Music exists globally and across cultures, making it a valuable source for culturally sustaining pedagogy and development of [cultural awareness](#). These factors can guide students through making meaning of the world in which they live via music making and appreciation, thus developing a sense of place and belonging for themselves and others.

### Resources for Social Justice Education through Music:

#### [The Art of Writing Songs for Social Change](#)

- An article providing an overview of Berklee College of Music's "Songs for Social Change" contest.

#### [TeachRock: Music and Social Justice Movements](#)

- A collection of resources and lesson plans that integrate music and social justice education.

#### [Music for Social Justice with Aisha Fukushima](#)

- A video about "raptivist" Aisha Fukushima discussing how she uses music to engender social change.

#### [The Beat as an Object of Celebration & Concern in Segregation-Era America](#)

- A unit on how the beat has been used through the civil rights movement and beyond.

## Announcements

**Vermont Music Educators Association Virtual (VMEA) Conference:** The VMEA virtual conference will take place on February 10, 2021. Music educators from Vermont and beyond are holding sessions on a variety of topics and strategies. [Information on the conference and sessions can be found online.](#)

**Vermont Art Educators Association (VAEA) Ant-Racist Art Teachers December Workshops:** VAEA will be holding a second round of workshops with the Anti-Racist Art Teachers this December. These three-part workshops include asynchronous presentations from the group and live Q&A sessions. The cost is \$50 for all three sessions. [Registration forms can be found online.](#)

## Announcements Cont'd

**VT Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Educator Networking Sessions:** Monthly virtual networking opportunities are currently being held for visual and performing arts educators from across the state. These sessions will focus on maintaining and continuing to develop a sense of agency through networking, sharing successes, and reflective dialogue. If you are interested in participating in these sessions, please complete the appropriate registration form:

- [Visual Arts Teachers Registration](#)
- [Performing Arts Teachers Registration](#)

**Vermont Poetry Out Loud:** The Poetry Out Loud program provides pathways for students to explore works of poetry and presentation skills. Students will compete for cash prizes at the state level by submitting recitation videos to the statewide competition showcase. [Details and registration forms can be found online.](#)

**Vermont Presidential Scholars for the Arts:** The deadline for VT Presidential Scholars is **November 13th, 2020**. This statewide recognition is held in conjunction with the existing Vermont Presidential Scholars Program for High School Seniors and the Presidential Scholars Program for Career Technical Education. More info on the recognition can also be found [online](#) as well as the [arts application](#).

## Additional Resources

[Art as a Tool for Social Advocacy](#)

[5 Steps to Make your own Political Art](#)

[How Black Art can Spark Conversations with Children](#)

[NAEA Position Statement on Cultural Appropriation](#)

[Big Picture: Books with Brothers](#)

## References

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