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Enhancing Cultural Consciousness

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Article abstract

Student engagement and empowerment promote active, first-person conversations with national and international scholars and artists through virtual presentations. The process discussed below establishes a procedure for student-directed learning and empowerment. This process can be applied to any publications, internet resources, videos, YouTube conversations, and so much more to develop multinarrative and multicultural learning opportunities. Active learning is evident in student reflections that were collected throughout the Fall 2020 semester. By accepting this process of empowering students through active, authentic learning, changes to the syllabus, curricula, and pedagogy had to be made. There is excitement about the potentiality presented by future students as they engage in a similar process of the analysis of chapters, ongoing Blackboard discussions, and how they approach encounters with scholars and artists through a virtual medium.

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Steve Willis

Steve Willis taught in public schools for 23 years before joining Missouri State University as a Professor of Art Education. He has presented at national and international conferences, and published in national and international journals. His recent book with Richards, A. (2023). *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers* (3rd ed.) reflects his spirituality and cultural awareness. Steve is active in InSEA as a former Vice-President (2017–2021) and USSEA as a former President (2013–2015). Steve is a Distinguished Fellow for the NAEA and has received USSEA's Kenneth Marantz Fellows Award and Ziegfeld Award. As an artist, he creates images concerning spirituality. <http://night4hawk.wixsite.com/stevewillis>.

Student engagement and empowerment promote active, first-person conversations with national and international scholars and artists through virtual presentations. The process discussed below establishes a procedure for student-directed learning and empowerment. This process can be applied to any publications, internet resources, videos, YouTube conversations, and so much more to develop multinarrative and multicultural learning opportunities. Active learning is evident in student reflections that were collected throughout the Fall 2020 semester. By accepting this process of empowering students through active, authentic learning, changes to the syllabus, curricula, and pedagogy had to be made. There is excitement about the potentiality presented by future students as they engage in a similar process of the analysis of chapters, ongoing Blackboard discussions, and how they approach encounters with scholars and artists through a virtual medium.

Keywords: *authentic learning, student self-empowerment, reflective narrative, international voices, and student-directed learning.*

Enhancing Cultural Consciousness

There are many opportunities to use publications to support art activities in K-20 classrooms, such as *Cultural Sensitivity in a Global World: A Guide for Teachers* (2016), *Frameworks for Teaching* (2019), *Transforming our Practices: Indigenous Art, Pedagogies and Philosophies* (2017), and *The Routledge Companion to Decolonizing Art, Craft, and Visual Culture Education* (2023). Here I will write specifically about how I utilize *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers* (2023) (Figure 1) to expand students' first-person learning in a digitally accessible global classroom. Topics in this writing include student reflections about race, gender, religion, language, and location. Though this may be a different way to have students experience diversity, I hope that each educator can capture the importance of first-person conversations with national and international scholars and artists through digital technology. These conversations, of course, are after the students have read about and discussed in class the topics about the variable meanings and multi-narratives. Though this may appear to be a self-serving book promotion, I employ this text as a resource and process from the first-person experience as a co-author, but more

importantly, as an educator actively using the text to promote globalized educational opportunities with national and international artists and educators.

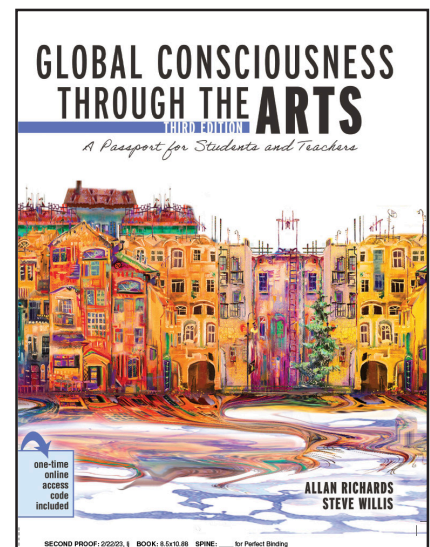


Figure 1. Book cover of Richards, A., & Willis, S. (2023) *Global consciousness through the arts: A passport for students and teachers, 3rd ed.*

This book, *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students*, is standard reading for two undergraduate art education classes I teach at Missouri State University, *ART 401: Teaching of Art*, and *ART 460: Critical Studies in Art Education*. The 206-page publication has important information (Figure 2), but more important to me and my students are the open global diversity experiences in the 323-page Ancillary with 58 authors from 18 countries, who are:

Cultural Diversity in the History of Art Education	Marjorie Cohee-Manifold (USA) p 5
Chapter 1 Art AND Culture	Teresa Torres de Eca (Portugal) p 25
	Rabeya Jalil (Pakistan) p 28
	Angela La Porte (USA) p 38
Chapter 2 Spirituality, Humanities, and Responsibilities	Fatih Benzer (Turkey/USA) p 41
	Gary R. Bibbs (USA) p 45
	Jeff Broome (USA) p 50
Chapter 3 Finding One's Voice	Adrienne Boulton (Canada) p 52
	Christopher Mostyn (USA) p 57
	Nausheen Iftikhar (Pakistan) p 60
Chapter 4 Contributions	Joni Boyd Acuff (USA) p 67
	Ademola Wahab Azeze (Nigeria) p 72
	Bobby Scroggins (USA) p 77
Chapter 5 The International Language	Jeanne Crosby (USA) p 80
	Kathleen F. Hall (Canada) p 88
	Christiana Afrikaner (Namibia) p 91
Chapter 6 Media - Materials - Techniques	Bekah J. Abbiatti (USA) p 109
	Gabriella Pataky (Hungary) p 113
	Kim Sneyvangers (Australia) p 119
	Rachel Vosila (Australia) p 119
Chapter 7 Identity	Barbara Caldwell (USA) p 124
	Timo Jokela (Finland) p 127
	Bethany Kelly (USA) p 132
Chapter 8 Community of Intersectionality	Mousumi De (India/USA) p 135
	Laurie A. Eldridge (USA/Cherokee) p 142
	Ana Maria Barbero Franco (Spain) p 144
Chapter 9 Life and Career Skills	Hazel L. Bradshaw-Beaumont Young (Jamaica) p 151
	Ben Owen (USA) p 154
	Mary Stokrocki (USA) p 161
Chapter 10 Learning - Innovative Thinking - Skills Development	Olivia Lussi (USA) p 166
	Jason Sturgill (USA) p 171
	Fidvia Maria de Brito Pedrosa Vasconcelos (Brazil) p 177
	Olivia Compton (USA) p 180
	Joshua Barry (USA) p 180
	Mira Kallio-Tavin (Finland) p 184
	Lertsiri Bovornkitti (Thailand) p 193
	Mary Newman (USA) p 201
Chapter 11 Information - Media - Technology	Hsiao-Cheng (Sandrine) Han (China/Canada) p 214
	Duane Keaton (USA) p 217
	David Wischer (USA) p 219
Chapter 12 Integration - Collaboration - Connoisseurship	Ryan Shin (South Korea/USA) p 223
	Alexa Rhee (South Korea) p 223
	Tom Tobias (USA) p 227
Chapter 13 Traditional and Contemporary Art Practices	Courtney Weida (USA) p 232
	Carlee Bradbury (USA) p 232
	Kevin Wilde (USA) p 238
	Kate Coleman (Australia) p 241
	Alexander LUCIANO Hudson (Australia) p 241
	Jordan Wells (Australia) p 241
Chapter 14 Themes and Portfolios	Mirian Celeste Martins (Brazil) p 252
	Penny McElroy (USA) p 256
	Angela Saldanha (Portugal) p 258
Chapter 15 Environmental and Ecological Art	Glen Coutts (Scotland) p 279
	Carlynn Forst (USA) p 284
	Teresa Torres de Eca & Angela Saldanha (Portugal) p 285

Figure 2. Contributors to the *Ancillary for Global Consciousness: A Passport for Students and Teachers* (2023).

Because of the amount of information in the Ancillary, I will limit this writing to four interactions with scholars and include abbreviated students' reflections and word frequency analysis of the virtual sessions and how the conversations magnified active student learning. This process could be replicated in every classroom at every level.

Procedures and Practices

Over three years, my Zoom pedagogy has evolved to magnify student engagement and empowerment. This was not new; it was prefaced by my research in Skype Scholars (2012) when I noted that Skype scholars reduced the geographic distance by bringing scholars and artists into the classroom who were previously not accessible. In *Instructional Technologies and Social Media: First-Person Voices in Teacher Education* (2012), I wrote that videoconferencing facilitated perceptual and cultural interactions in real-time for students and teachers with those who come from diverse backgrounds. This has not changed. I still believe in developing student engagement and empowerment—the students do more and learn more. I feel I am most effective as an educator when the students find their voices and take control of their learning. This is the emphasis of this practice. Both ART 401 (spring) and ART 460 (fall) were blended classes. During the pandemic (fall semester 2020), ART 460 was transformed into an exclusively digital class.

Most educators will agree that reading information is important, but discussing the chapter is more important. Student realizations

that arise from blending the information from reading, discussing, and then talking directly to the authors are most dynamic, and without a doubt, the most important. When scholars Zoom with the class, it provides authentic learning experiences in real-time with authors addressing the student-generated questions about their Ancillary contributions as well as providing supplemental information for deeper insights for the students. Throughout the semester, each student, in turn, was assigned to collect questions from their peers to provide to the guest scholar/artist and then to moderate the Zoom sessions.

What follows are four abbreviated paraphrased reflections from the students in ART 460 (fall semester, 2020) in response to the dynamic, real-time, in-person Zoom interactions.

Student Responses

Data from each scholar's presentation was analyzed by word frequency in students' reflections (see below). Though reflections varied from presentation to presentation, it is clear from the reflections that students were most concerned about how to teach their future students (205 references) and the impact on their future classrooms (60 references). Other variables were noted as related to the presentation topic. Word frequency was applied to all student responses producing a total of 12,631 words. The students' reflections were open-ended, which contributed to the variance of word count by presentation, and this was compounded by not all students being present for all presentations.

"I feel I am most effective as an educator when the students find their voices and take control of their learning."

Word count		culture	community	classroom	students	diversity	race
3399	Frequency	17	3	22	54	18	8

Table 3. Visiting Scholar—Dr. Allan Richards, Co-author (Jamaica/USA).

Student one: Finally hearing from Dr. Allan Richards was very nice after reading the book for these past few semesters he co-authored. With Dr. Richards being a person of color, he gave a lot of great tips and advice on how to handle that topic in the classroom. One thing that he repeated a few times was "Diversity Maximizes Learning." This is a very helpful statement that I hope to always remember as I am teaching.

Student two: One of my questions was based on how to incorporate subjects such as Jim Crow Laws and the Black Codes into my art classroom. Dr. Richards gave me the advice of not necessarily leading with history because it might turn students off from listening. I can see this happening and I agree with him. I want my students to learn about these topics, but I don't want them to feel like I am forcing it on them, or just following up on what their history teachers taught them.

Student three: Dr. Richards had a wonderful discussion with our class today. We had the honor of hearing him speak about the experiences he had dealt with teaching, race, and COVID-19. I asked him about resources to use and he highly recommended *Global Consciousness*, which has all the material I need to have a thoughtful and aware classroom. He explained the point of view of students and teachers who are people of color.

Student four: Richards also talked about diversity in the classroom. One thing he mentioned that I think is very important is how diversity is not just a one-time deal. Diversity is something you include in your classroom every single day. Teachers should not just be planning a single lesson over a Black artist because it is Black History Month. Each project that students do should include examples from multiple cultures.

Word count		culture	community	classroom	students	Muslim	bias/biases	peace
4024	Frequency	5	5	19	55	24	12/11	22

Table 4. CH 8 Community of Intersectionality. Visiting Scholar: Dr. Mousumi De (India/USA)

Student one: The more scholars visit us and have shared their knowledge, the more I am starting to realize how interconnected we all are as humans, even though we may not even realize it. It begs the question—why are we still treating people differently and creating stigmas that dominate all other cultural characteristics and become a culture's sole defining (in media, at least) characteristic?

Student two: I would like to create projects in my classroom that explore beliefs and biases. I think it would be good for students to lower their walls and allow their attitudes to be challenged. I look forward to using this information as a springboard to develop those ideas further.

Student three: I liked that she asked them [her students] to go beyond their initial, culturally informed opinions of a concept like peace, or

even what it means to be Muslim. Those outside of a group have often seen those who are inside of it as strange, exclusive, or even dangerous, and the same has certainly been true for the Islamic faith. The [US] media in recent years has not helped with the popular opinion and view of Muslim citizens, as the zealous bigotry of the few has overshadowed the peace and humility of the very, very many.

Student four: I also enjoyed that Dr. Mousumi De was so careful and respectful when working with cultures different than hers. She mentioned that she used "the three B's" every time she went into the classroom to be conscious of while teaching. The three B's stood for background, bias, and beliefs. Dr. De noted that teachers need to be careful about how their background, biases, and beliefs could influence their teaching.

" The more scholars visit us and have shared their knowledge, the more I am starting to realize how interconnected we all are as humans, even though we may not even realize it."

Word count		culture	community	classroom	students	global	media
2907	Frequency	36	2	16	45	7	7

Table 5. CH 12 Integration + Collaboration + Connoisseurship. Visiting Scholar: Dr. Ryan Shin (South Korea/USA).

Student one: Another topic that piqued my interest in Dr. Shin's discussion was using digital art and other technologies to connect with students from other parts of the world. Presenting lesson plans to different parts of the world is an interesting idea that I have thought about before but never considered possible.

Student two: The presentation by Dr. Shin today was really interesting. I especially enjoyed Dr. Shin's presentations on projects that he has done with his students that address diversity. I would love to participate in global projects like a couple of the ones that he presented.

Student three: It was a great pleasure to have Dr. Shin share with our class through Zoom.

He shared with us about visual culture, globally engaged art curriculum, and new media technology. I found the lessons that he shared to be very interesting and each seemed to be complex in the amount of critical thinking required of the students.

Student four: His global environment classroom project example was a great idea and would be something I would be interested in doing in my future classes! I think this could also be an awesome project if I were to ever teach in an area with high ELL learners—it could be a pen-pal-type project between students within the same classes or even just in the same school.

Word count		culture	community	classroom	travel	language	art
2301	Frequency	13	2	3	51	9	40

Table 6. CH 14 Themes and Portfolios. Visiting Scholar Angela Saldanha (Portugal).

Student one: I liked how Angela included images and information about the work she is doing today and the work she has done throughout the pandemic. I find it inspiring how she has continued to work through the pandemic even though she was not able to travel. She has been doing work with disabled people in her community and giving them handmade bags. She gives them the means to learn photography, which is a universal language and a great way for anyone to communicate.

Student two: I think allowing ourselves as art teachers to step out of our comfort zone to go to new places will give our students an advantage to learn more about cultures, instead of reading about them in a book, or online. I think it was also important that Dr. Saldanha spoke about how these trips were achievable through grants, organizations, and societies.

Student three: During her travels, she took lots of photos which is an art form in itself. Then from those photos, she was able to create other artworks like videos or embroideries.

Art is a great way to find understanding about places you have been. In the classroom, I think this could make a great lesson. Students could "travel," depending on age, to places like the grocery store, or if they're older, a trip out of town. This travel could be documented with a camera and students would have to make an artwork out of it. A project like this could make students look at the world around them through a different lens and become more observant about their surroundings.

Student four: She also talked about the importance of joining groups like InSEA. I plan to check into this organization and find out more about joining in the future. I can see from her, and others we have met, the importance of networking. Having contacts outside of your own culture who share their perspectives and ideas will make you a better educator. Finally, she shared a video of traveling from a car or train window. This gave me an idea for students to capture video while traveling over the winter or summer break, and using that to create a short artwork to share with classmates.

"I think allowing ourselves as art teachers to step out of our comfort zone to go to new places will give our students an advantage to learn more about cultures, instead of reading about them in a book, or online."

Ending Thoughts

Many publications can accomplish what I have done in my classroom with *Global Consciousness*. A quick Internet search will provide documents, videos, YouTube conversations, and so much more that can be used in any art education classroom for multinarrative and multicultural learning opportunities. But talking directly to the author(s) may be more of a challenge. Global time differences can be an issue. As a co-author, I had significant connections with the *Ancillary* authors who generally agree to videoconference with my students. Since I do not have a budget, I reciprocate by agreeing to present virtual conversations in their classrooms.

It is amazing to experience a learning process directed by students that enhances their empowerment. When empowering students through active, authentic learning first appeared on my educational horizon, I had to make substantial changes to my syllabi, curricula, and pedagogical approaches. The first thing I had to divorce was the *idea* of being in control and stepping away from the podium. When I gave up trying to be in control, new horizons developed—those of deep learning, analytical narratives, and direct pragmatic applications. The next hurdle was the idea of me not teaching. I indeed do teach less, but students learn more through the entire class interactions they generate and the student-directed Zoom discussions. I had to learn to listen more and talk less. I had to change my assessment protocols to accept written and verbal data, and most importantly, I added significant involvement of students through peer assessments of Blackboard discussions, analytical narratives, and digital presentations. These are still in transition, and I am excited about the new potentiality that may be presented by future students as they engage in analysis of chapters, ongoing Blackboard discussions, and how they approach virtual encounters with scholars and artists.

Student Reflections

Student reflections varied from presentation to presentation, and their areas of interest. Other variables which were not noted were the students’ fatigue levels during the semester and the anxiety and stress of a virtual classroom which was normally seated before the COVID-19 pandemic. The instructions for the reflections were purposely designed to be open-ended

allowing as much student freedom as possible in the breadth and depth of their responses. The total experience was beneficial and reinforced the need to address teaching methodologies and future classroom dynamics. The references in the students’ reflections were overwhelmingly focused on their future students and the respective classrooms with a combined 265 word-frequency responses.

Allan Richards	Word count		culture	community	classroom	students	diversity	race	
	3399	Frequency	17	3	22	54	18	8	
Mousumi De	Word count		culture	community	classroom	students	Muslim	bias	peace
	4024	Frequency	5	5	19	55	24	12/11	22
Ryan Shin	Word count		culture	community	classroom	students	global	media	
	2907	Frequency	36	2	16	45	7	7	
Angela Saldanha	Word count		culture	community	classroom	travel	language	art	
	2301	Frequency	13	2	3	51	9	40	
Total	Word count		Culture	Community	Classroom	Students			
	12,631	Common Frequency	71	12	60	205			

Table 7. Combined Student Narrative Word Frequency Distribution

I hope you will join me in finding the perfect publication(s) and develop an active videoconferencing dialog between authors and students to enhance student empowerment, and first-person student voices for dense and diverse multi-narratives for learning.

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