Insight / Incite

Narratives by Art Educators

Argy Nestor and Lindsay Pinchbeck

In July Agy Nestor and Lindsay Pinchbeck travelled for 18 days with Gol Malawi, a Maine based non-profit Foundation working to improve education and reduce poverty in the Nkhisi District of Malawi. They provided an Arts Integrated professional development workshop for local teachers.

Overview

During the workshop ideas were explored in Drama, Music, Movement, Poetry, Storytelling, and Visual Arts. Teachers developed lesson plans around a Fiber Arts project. Underlying themes such as Hopes and Dreams, Traditions, Making Mistakes were woven through the work.

On our final day we turned our classroom space into a gallery to display the work. It was at that moment we realized the profound impact of the arts - teachers became artists and educators became connected through the art making process. Local students and community members gathered to celebrate and recognize each teacher. The biggest joy was seeing the excitement as the teachers shared their work with the students, elders and chiefs of the community. The buzz in the gallery was alive and there were many sparks of inspiration from the visitors.

We Observed

* The power of the arts to teach, learn, and communicate.
* Teachers digging into the thematic ideas such as Hopes and Dreams, sharing ideas and collaborating.
* One teacher being recognized as a strong leader because of her classroom work around singing and moving.
* Lots of laughter was shared and relationships built.

Teacher Reflections

* "My Hopes and dreams are being a good teacher with the knowledge you have given. I am more important now, I will be more than I was." Cecilia
* "Now flexible to share my views and my voice." Olipa
* "This training is helpful to acquire different skills, artwork, the quilt, it will help my learners to have skills for the future. I appreciate different ways of sharing and appreciating everyone's work." Sekeran

For Lindsay and Argy the experience has clarified the power of the arts that leads to empathy and action.

Argy Nestor is the Director of Arts Education at the Maine Arts Commission. She served as the Visual and Performing Arts Specialist at the Maine Department of Education and spent 30 fun filled years in the classroom teaching visual arts to middle school students. Argy loved collaborating with colleagues to teach in an integrated fashion. She is most proud of the Maine Arts Leadership Initiative (formerly the Maine Arts Assessment Initiative) and the work that all arts educators do in classrooms across the state. Argy can be reached at anestor@maine-outdoors.biz.

Lindsay Pinchbeck is the director of Sweet Tree Arts and founder of Sweetland School, a Reggio-inspired arts integrated program in Hope. She has been teaching in art and alternative education settings for the past 17 years. Art, she says, can be shared by all ages and all abilities on many levels: "We create as active participants, engage as observers and share experiences together that enrich our lives and build empathy when we explore the world through the arts." Lindsay can be reached at sweettreearts@gmail.com.