

Real Lives 21: Showcasing the Stories of Art Educators and Contemporary Learning Abstract

The proposed book's **central purpose** is to share meaningful stories of practicing art teachers throughout North America. Each chapter will focus on the unique professional experiences of a different art educator. Our primary **agenda** is to provide a realistic portrait of the day-to-day lives of art teachers working in a variety of contexts. Our intent is to give preservice students a set of real life images of their chosen future occupation with opportunities for reflection and discussion for practicing teachers or returning graduate students. The overall **theme** of the book relates to the importance of storytelling as a way to describe current professional practice and to provide reflection on what it means to be an art educator in the 21st century. The primary **research question** guiding this study is: What are the daily professional experiences and stories of selected art teachers working in a variety of contexts, and what meaning do they derive from their work? Our primary objective is to give preservice students a set of real life portrayals related to their chosen future occupation, with opportunities for reflection and discussion for practicing teachers or returning graduate students as well.

In selecting the exemplars for this book, we intend to share the stories of teachers working in a wide array of professional contexts. Our intention is to be as inclusive as possible, while still providing workaday views that don't idealize or over-problematize the realities of art educators working in a wide array of professional contexts, educational levels, and geographic regions. Elementary, middle, and high school art teachers will be represented within the individual chapters, as will teachers working with a variety of traditional and digital media, and in urban, rural, and suburban environments.

Our primary method for collecting data will be to conduct a series of interviews with each teacher along with some use of written questionnaire responses. Secondary methods of obtaining data will include the collection of qualitative field notes either through direct observation or through the analysis of video taped lessons, and may also include qualitative reflections from others who have experienced or are familiar with each teacher's practices. All sources of data will be analyzed and compared as a way to synthesize information into structurally corroborated stories of practice.