

## **Communities of Practice Supporting Pre-Service Art Teachers**

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### **Introduction**

In the winter of 2023, we formed an intergenerational Community of Practice (CoP) to develop practical knowledge for preservice art teachers and support early-career teachers beyond graduation. We garnered the participation of veteran teachers, forming a hub of reciprocal support that would in turn strengthen the profession in the area. This came as a response to a perceived crisis in the sector, which was confirmed shortly after by multiple reports, such as Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in April 2024, and the National Art Educators Association's Art Teacher Recruitment and Retention Taskforce in June 2024. Both pointed out at burning out as a leading cause driving teachers out of the profession, and quality mentorship as a powerful strategy to counter it.

### **Intergenerational Communities of Practice**

The CoP meets monthly around a preestablished topic, and has the Visual Arts Education Methods classes as the anchoring space for the meetings. All teachers in the region are invited. For this, we partnered with the Wisconsin Art Educators Association (WAEA). For each topic, one or two teachers are invited as presenters, although discussion is encouraged, promoting formats that elicit participation. The topics seek to clarify situations that emerge from practice.

### **Progress**

During this first year, we established our group. The data collected preliminarily, has been mostly observation during meetings, survey questions, and informal conversations with teacher and students.

As we move into our second year, we are seeking to develop interviews with preservice teachers and recent graduates. We are developing qualitative case studies from a reduced number of subjects and continue during their first five years of professional practice.

### **Conclusions (so far)**

- Art teaching entails a kind of knowledge that emerges from practice that are rarely covered in the curriculum. CoPs can help cover these gaps.
- At the social-emotional level, meeting with a like-minded group of professionals can provide much needed support.

- Preservice teachers expressed having improved their self-efficacy in teaching as a result of the meetings.
- Veteran teachers enjoyed mentoring younger practitioners and reinforced their expertise through the meetings.

National Art Educators Association Art Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force (2024) *Supporting Our Current and Future Visual Arts, Design and Media Arts Educators. Report and Recommendations 2023-2024* <https://arteducators-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/2261/c7aadd2c-5dcd-4e82-925f-fee340645cdd.pdf?1717547051>

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