

Communities of Practice Supporting Pre-Service Teachers

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Introduction

The education field faces multiple challenges that drive teachers to quit the profession.

How can an art teacher preparation program articulate a mentorship group in the region to promote recruitment and retention efforts and help prevent early-career burnout?

How can teacher preparation programs offer support to our students beyond their graduation?

How can these changes take place at the structural level of teacher preparation programs and be permanent?

Literature Review

- According to Wenger-Trayner (2015), communities of practice (CoP) are “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”
- It differs from a PLC in that participation is voluntary and focuses on internal motivations rather than externally-imposed goals.
- Wisconsin’s Dept of Public Instruction report on workforce crisis:
 - only 60% of first-year teachers are still employed in the state after six years
 - salaries
 - finding work in another school or district, personal reasons, compensation, work-life balance, finding work in another profession, and workload
 - common strategies: employing substitutes, temporarily license, and hiring below districts’ preferred standards
- National Art Educators Association’s Art Teacher Recruitment and Retention Taskforce’s findings report:
 - 28% of art teachers describe community and mentorship as the leading support as educators together as membership to national and state organizations (24%)
 - A formal mentorship program would enable the sustained connections crucial to fully supporting beginning educators (Hanawalt & Hofsess, 2020)
 - Meaningful mentorship opportunities can better prepare graduates for the realities of art teaching (Yost, 2006).
 - A formal mentorship program would help create a coordinated pipeline of art education students in partnership with cooperating teachers and college and university art education programs.

Methods

• Participants

- Establishing partnerships with veteran area teachers through open calls and networking with Wisconsin Art Educators Association.
- Infusing the program’s methods classes with Community-Based Learning to get students to partner with area professionals
- Invite recent graduates and expand to collaborate with other Universities of Wisconsin system universities.

• Instruments

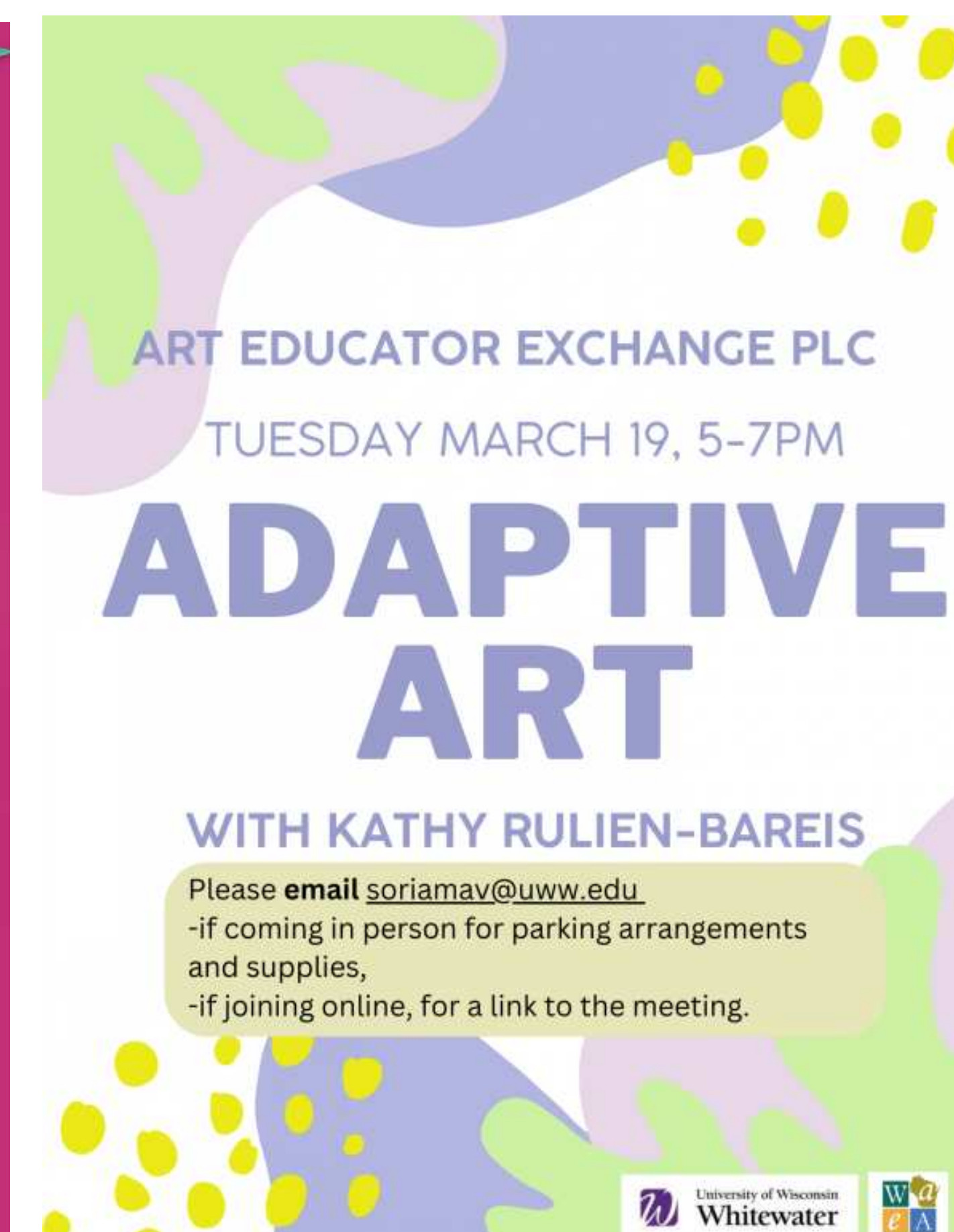
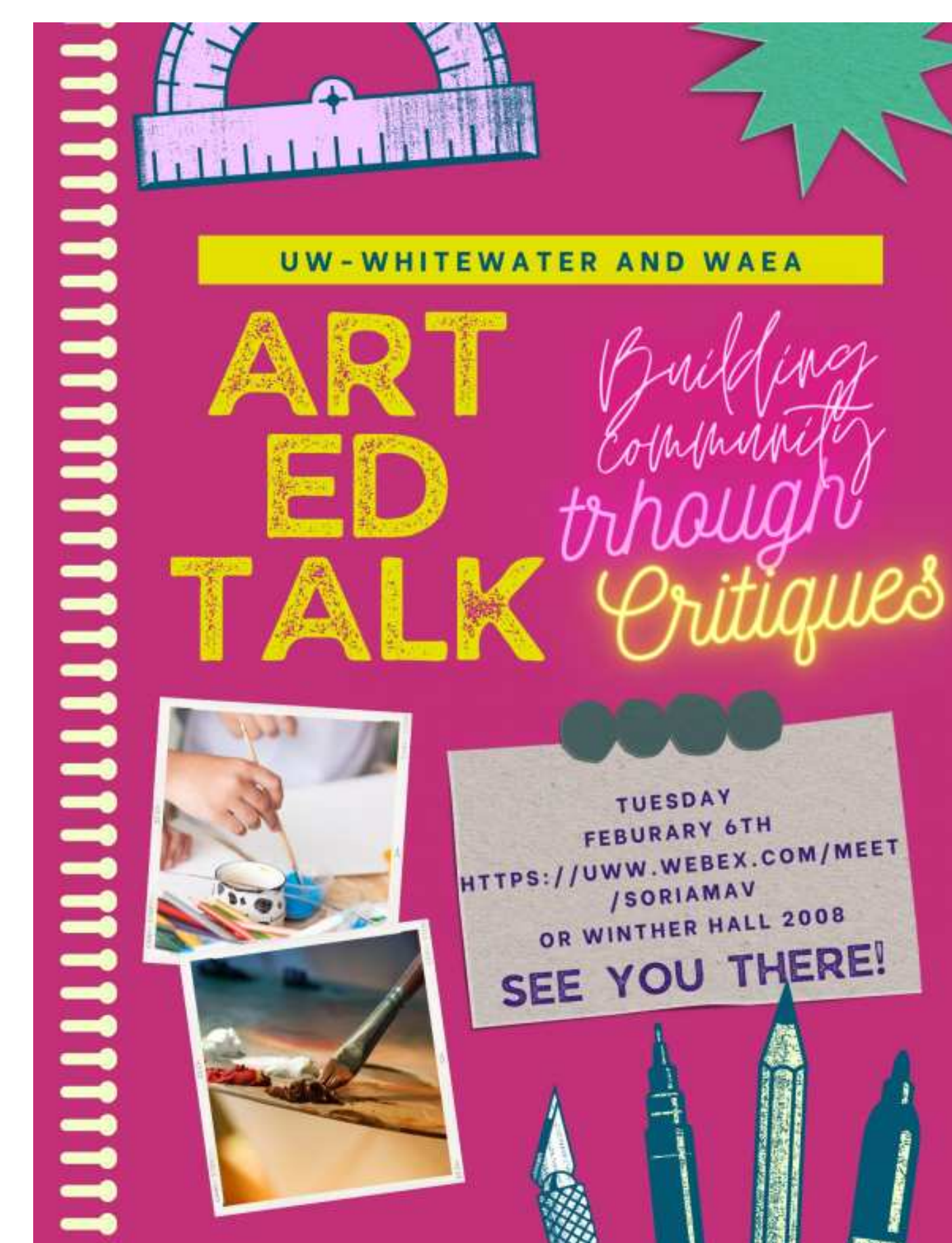
- Monthly meetings for a focused discussion around a given topic (related to a specific problem of practice).
- Data collection (observation during meetings, survey questions, and informal conversations)

• Study Design & Data Analysis (currently ongoing/future)

- Interviews with preservice teachers and recent graduates during their first five years of professional practice.
- Elaboration of qualitative case studies from a reduced number of subjects.

Progress

- Establishing a community through partnership and collaboration, creating regular meetings and selecting case study subjects.



Conclusion (in progress)

- CoPs can expand curriculum to center learning on problems of practice that rarely arise in traditional classes.
- 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.

Wenger-Trayner, E. & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015, June). “Introduction to communities of practice: A brief overview of the concept and its uses.” *Wenger-Trayner.com*

Study Limitations

- Small sample size for conducting quantitative analysis
- To observe significant changes, we will have to keep studying for the next five years at least.

Acknowledgements

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