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The teacher in the studio

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The Teacher in the Studio

By

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Early Childhood General and Special Education

Mentor:

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Abstract

The Teacher in the Studio by Molly Alexander is an Independent Study in the design and development of original classroom material. As a potter and teacher, I connected my practice in the studio to my practice in the classroom by designing and creating cups for the two-year-old children who I teach. This thesis includes visual documentation of my design and production process, an analysis of theory and research on the role of design and materials in the inclusive early childhood classroom environment, and personal reflection on the parallels between working with young children as a teacher and working with materials as an artist. I took all of the photographs for this thesis aside from the photographs of my pottery process, which were taken by Jaclyn Alexander. Individuals and institutions have been masked.

Dedication

I would like to thank Sue Carbary for supporting and understanding the meaning of this project, and for being a calming and grounding presence throughout my Bank Street experience. I remember during my first semester, when I was considering the dual degree program with social work and I was overwhelmed about where to begin, you advised firmly but gently that I just needed to land somewhere and dig in. You were right, and Bank Street has been a good place to land. Thank you to Margaret Blachly, my first advisor at Bank Street, who helped to make my experiences here full of meaning. Margaret, I feel truly grateful for your dedication and mentorship. Thank you for supporting my experiments with aesthetic learning during my year of student teaching, and for expanding my personal reflection and development as a beginning teacher through your thought-provoking questions, attentive listening, and perceptive feedback. Thank you to the directors at my nursery school for your enthusiasm for this project and for letting me experiment. Thank you to Jaclyn Alexander for spending an afternoon taking photographs in the studio and thank you to my family for your love and support. Finally, thank you to Ed Quish for your editing expertise and for your patient, thoughtful, and insightful support, always.

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Introduction: Personal Reflection

Ever since I can remember I have nurtured within me a strong pull toward making, toward working with my hands, and toward creating materials and spaces. As a small child my favorite household task was setting the table. I took pleasure in laying the dishes in what I deemed the best possible arrangement and designing platters of fruit to accompany the bagels and lox when relatives came over for brunch. I remember feeling an indelible connection between the way the food was laid out and the way that people responded to it. I could sense a subtle slowing down and a feeling of togetherness when gathering around food that had been laid out with care. I also remember my bitter disappointment as I watched grown-ups gobble my carefully arranged pieces of fruit.

Somehow I had the good sense to take my interest in design beyond such ephemeral acts as food plating into the art of making the plates that hold the food. Pottery was an instant connection for me when I began as a thirteen-year-old. I loved the way the clay felt in my hands. I loved squishing it and wedging it, and letting it glide under my palms as it spun on the wheel. I loved how the act of centering clay on the wheel required me to actually become centered within myself. I also loved taking pots home that became part of my family's collection of dishes. Being able to contribute to meals in this way was an important act for me. Meals that incorporated handmade pots felt more intimate and warm. Pottery is grounding and centering in its process, and its products have the potential to shift daily small, yet significant, human experiences.

Over the years my practice in pottery has faded in and out of my life. In college I took a four-year hiatus, too immersed in a campus that although wonderfully creative, lacked a pottery studio. Other creative endeavors came into the picture to relieve my overly academic experience. Dance became crucial. With my head filling with books,

ideas, and more ideas, my hands and body were hoping I would include them, too. I remember my first modern dance class at college; I experienced there a similar feeling to my first pottery class. Dancing, like throwing a pot or laying a table, involves mindfully inhabiting space and honoring one's embodied experience of life.

Something that drew me toward teaching young children is their connection to their embodied experience of life and learning. Young children are more closely connected to the playful and present spirit in us all— what we call the 'inner child' as we get older. I was drawn toward being around this liveliness, and toward setting the tone and the space for learning experiences.

I moved to Brooklyn four years ago, after one year of living and teaching in France. While out walking one evening in Williamsburg, some pottery in a window caught my eye and I found myself in front of a ceramics studio. A few weeks later I started taking classes, and everything that I loved about pottery began to come back to me.

After about a year and a half of classes there, my partner, who at the time was working as a chef, took me to a new Scandinavian restaurant in the neighborhood. Before any food was served, our table was set, and that is when the experience began. The earthy, graceful, and sensible dinnerware set a calm and warm tone. It was clear to me that the dishes were handmade, and I asked our server where they came from. That is when I got Jane Herold's business card. On a rare whim of extroversion, I decided to send her a letter telling her that I loved her work and asking if I could apprentice with her over the summer. She actually said yes; somehow it was all really simple.

So, last summer I spent an idyllic four weeks in Palisades, New York at Jane Herold's pottery. It is on a piece of old farmland right by the Hudson River, and the

pottery wheel looks out onto the land. I learned a lot from Jane—about pottery, living, and teaching, and about seeing a process all the way through from beginning to end.



View from the potter's wheel at Jane Herold's pottery

When I worked with Jane, I learned how to mix glazes from ash and minerals, how to recycle clay, how to prepare kiln shelves, how to throw a pot on a kick wheel instead of an electric wheel, how to make beakers, how to make better mug handles, and many more lessons. All of this was learned through experience, and through fully embracing the nature of learning as a process. When Jane taught me something, she showed me how to do it once, and then left me alone to work on it. This way, I had space and time to learn through *doing*. Jane respected the learning process as something that requires time, personal space, and the freedom to make mistakes. Jane's approach to making and to teaching was influential to me, and will remain so.

Back at work as a teacher in an inclusion nursery school, there was a conversation about the need for better cups. This conversation has a long history at the school, and is based on a driving interest in having well-designed cups for children to use independently during snack time. Snack is not just about having a bite to eat in our classroom; it is about children gathering in a shared experience and gaining confidence through serving themselves food and water autonomously. The school had struggled to find cups that allow for children to practice their independence, rather than hinder their independence. Cups that were too light tipped over and cups without handles were difficult to grasp. Knowing about my background in pottery, the school's directors suggested that I try to make cups.

So that was the jumping-off point for this integrative master's project. I decided I would document my process of designing and making the cups, and do research and writing about design in early childhood inclusion education. A very important aspect of this process and research is following the approach of universal design, and working on creating cups that can be functional for all children.

I started my research in the Bank Street library and came across *On Designing* by Anni Albers. I spent a few weeks completely immersed in reading this book, and the more I got into it, the more I started seeing connections between Albers' ideas, and John Dewey's ideas. Albers writes about working with materials in a way that captures a stance of respect and listening akin to the way Dewey writes about working with children. Moreover, it all resonated with my own thoughts about teaching and about making.

It really should come as no surprise to see this connection between Albers and Dewey, because they were both part of the same movement that is essential to the legacy

of progressive education. The Progressive era brought about ideas concerning humanity, art, democracy, and learning that were all wrapped up together and have somehow over the years become less entwined when we learn about ideas in education. I was drawn to Bank Street because of its history of progressive education and its commitment to teaching the whole child. In a few courses I had the opportunity to learn about Dewey, Friedrich Froebel, Maria Montessori, the Reggio Emilia approach, the inclusion model, and universal design. With this project I intend to extend that learning, deepen it, and connect it to my own experiences both in and out of the classroom.

As my culminating project at Bank Street, it feels fitting to engage in work that addresses the role of aesthetic experience in education. Throughout my year of supervised fieldwork I was dedicated to bringing aesthetic experiences to children in the classrooms where I was a student teacher. I brought sewing into a first grade classroom and paper making, felt making and movement experiences into a kindergarten. During my first year as an assistant teacher at the school where I currently teach, I led the art curriculum throughout the year, facilitating children's progressing explorations in collage and clay.

Now, rather than engage in the children's artistic experiences, I focus on the teacher's. There are many reasons to say that teaching is an art. Working with young children— like working with materials— requires patience, perception, reflection, experimentation, care, intuition, and trust in the process. Both types of work involve interest in change and an imaginative sense of what's possible.

In this thesis I want to address how teaching and art merge, and how we can look to our historical roots and lineage as progressive educators to see our role as both

teachers and artists. I also wonder how teachers' experiences in the classroom might be affected by engaging in more personal experiences with art making. It is my hope that this project might inspire other educators to try approaching their teaching practice understanding themselves as both artists and educators, and perhaps also inspire teachers to spend some time in their own creative practice out of the classroom.

--- Molly Alexander, November 2013



Rationale: Cups in the Classroom

The role of materials and space has long been regarded as vitally interconnected with the role of the teacher in facilitating educational experiences and achieving educational goals. Young children learn through doing, through moving, and through interacting with materials in their environment. In the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood learning, the environment is often referred to as the ‘third teacher’ along with a team of two teachers (Kinchin & O’Connor, 2012). Froebel, the educational theorist who invented kindergarten, oriented his whole educational practice around children’s explorations of handmade materials, which he called ‘gifts’ (Kinchin & O’Connor, 2012). The name alone of these objects implies the level of thought and care put into their construction. Montessori, a pioneer in designing early childhood educational spaces and materials, was also one of the first educational theorists to recognize the crucial role of materials in the process of learning (Kinchin & O’Connor, 2012).

The kinds of materials you offer to children say something about how you view the children— how you respect them, and what you expect of them. As teachers, we give children materials that will challenge, inspire, and soothe, depending on the moment; materials that they can struggle with and that they can master. I am interested in offering children real, handmade materials and seeing how this influences their experiences in the moment when they use them.

In one of Jane Herold’s essays on pottery she writes, “The most important task of a useful pot is to generate caring” (2005, p. 70). She elaborates, “A good, useful pot will take you from unconscious to conscious, from mindless to mindful. It will make you aware in ways you otherwise might not be: of color, of form, of texture, of weight, of warmth – of humanness” (p. 70). Jane’s philosophy about pottery resonates with me, and

part of my rationale behind this project is to bring something that I see as a truth in my own life into the classroom and into the lives of the children I spend my days with.

When it comes to cups, many might be wary of giving a child a ceramic dish. Do we expect children to break them? Adults can break dishes, too. I do believe that children sense what the cups ask of them. When I brought in sample cups that I made, I watched the children slow down and take them in as they first held them in their hands, even if for only a very brief moment. Despite this belief in children's intuitive sensing, I feel that introducing ceramic cups into the classroom is truly an experiment. I do not know how it will go, and perhaps in the end my point of view will change. After all, I work with a bunch of energetic two-year-olds who are nearly always on the move. I am curious to find out how they will respond to handmade pots, and if the pots will impact the tone of snack-time, which in its current state tends to feel quite chaotic.

However, I also wonder, what would be the harm of breaking a cup? If anything, a child's experience of breaking a cup could be an educational moment, in which this child might learn something of his or her impact, and could lead to a greater sense of care and awareness of cause and effect. Much learning occurs through mistakes— through the opportunity to make mistakes without being protected from one's own effect on the environment. There is not much to be learned from dropping a plastic cup on the ground and then picking it up and rinsing it off. Perhaps, in fact, all that may be learned from plastic cups is that objects do not need real care.

The school where I teach has a philosophical approach toward working with young children that honors and supports each child's growing independence and autonomy. At snack, children pour their own water from small pitchers into their

individual cups and take their own snack from the snack basket before passing the basket to another child at the table. Because the goal here is developing independence— and by virtue of that independence, developing a rooted sense of self-confidence— it is crucial that the materials enable this independence.

In looking toward history and theory to further contextualize this project, I spent some time reading *The Montessori Method*, Montessori’s detailed publication on her teaching philosophy and practices from 1912. As the creator of *Casa dei Bambini*, “Children’s Houses”, Montessori paid considerable attention to the details of furniture and materials in educational spaces. The underlying reasoning behind Montessori’s development of materials that were at a child’s scale, and that children could actually physically maneuver, is the philosophical belief in the importance of a child’s development of independence. Montessori argues, “Any pedagogical action, if it is to be efficacious in the training of little children, must tend to *help* the children to advance upon this road of independence” (p. 97). She elaborates:

We habitually *serve* children... We do not stop to think that the child *who does not do, does not know how to do*. He must, nevertheless, do these things, and nature has furnished him with the physical means for carrying on these various activities, and with the intellectual means for learning how to do them. And our duty toward him is, in every case, that of *helping him* to make a conquest of such useful acts as nature intended he should perform for himself. (p. 98)

Montessori’s idea on independence resonates with my own philosophy, and I believe also with the school’s philosophy where I teach. Children learn through doing, and if adults do everything for a child, what do they learn? This is the thinking behind

snack-time in our classroom. Many children at the age of two are still fed by grown-ups. In our classroom, which is inherently a space dedicated to learning, children have the opportunity to learn how to serve and feed themselves.

Montessori also reflects on how the experience of knocking over a table or chair can actually be an educative one, and how liberty of movement and interaction with responsive materials can allow for deep learning experiences. Montessori writes,

And this freedom is not only an external sign of liberty, but a means of education. If by an awkward movement a child upsets a chair, which falls noisily to the floor, he will have an evident proof of his own incapacity; the same movement had it taken place amid stationary benches would have passed unnoticed by him. Thus the child has some means by which he can correct himself, and having done so he will have before him the actual proof of the power he has gained: the little tables and chairs remain firm and silent each in its own place. (p. 84)

Although I do not necessarily agree with Montessori's notion that knocking over a chair is a sign of incapacity or incompetence, nor that little chairs for very young children should be expected to remain firm and silent in their place, I certainly agree that young children learn through opportunities to make mistakes and to have an impact on their environment, not through being prevented from doing so. It is fascinating to me to draw these parallels between Montessori's views on independence, children, and materials, and my own views and experiences at the nursery school. Not having read Montessori's writing or studied her method during my time at Bank Street, I had no idea what a strong connection I would find between Montessori's ideas and my own practice and ideas.

Additionally, through engaging further with *The Montessori Method* and with *The Century of the Child*, the book that was published in conjunction with the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition *Century of the Child: Growing by Design, 1900-2000*, I learned that Francesco Randone, a painter and potter living in Rome at the time that Montessori was establishing her first Casa dei Bambini, influenced Montessori's views on education (Kinchin & O'Connor, 2012). Randone established La Scuola d'Arte Educatrice in 1890, with the goal of providing all children with artistic education through pottery (Kinchin & O'Connor, 2012). Through firsthand experiences making pots and bricks, Randone believed that children would be led to appreciate, love, and care for their surroundings (Montessori, 1912, p. 163). Maria Montessori decided to incorporate Randone's methods into her Children's Houses, creating opportunities for children to experience making pottery. She writes passionately about the pot as a symbol of moral and civic importance, stating, "The first object of which humanity felt the need was a vase...indeed the first food of mankind was cooked in a vase...the history of the vase follows the history of humanity itself" (p. 164). It felt somewhat serendipitous to discover that my connection with Montessori's ideas goes right back to pottery. This connection brings me back to thinking about my project of making pottery, to my rationale behind designing and making new cups.

Because I teach at an inclusion nursery school, the materials that we provide must accommodate all children's needs and abilities. Last year, we had yellow plastic BPA free cups with no handles. One child in the class, who had delays in motor planning and fine motor skills, struggled to pour water from his pitcher into his cup without spilling. The cup was so light that it would tip over and spill water from the slightest contact with

the pitcher. As the cup was fairly wide and didn't have a handle, this child would have needed to use both hands to steady it, which of course would have left him without a hand to use to pour water from the pitcher. So, a teacher usually assisted him by holding the cup steady while he poured water into it.

One of our goals for this child was for him to be able to pour his water independently. However, the material that we provided to him simply wasn't allowing him to reach this goal. When we replaced these cups with small, tin camping cups that have one handle, we saw immediately that this child was able to grasp the handle to steady the cup with one hand, and just like that, he poured his water independently. It seemed that all it took was making sure he had the right material so that he could achieve this goal.



Old BPA-free plastic cup



Current one-handled tin cup

From this anecdote, I mean to illustrate just how central the role of design is, especially in inclusion classrooms. In order to accommodate all children, we must look closely at the materials that we provide and see how they are impacting physical tasks. Furthermore, it's important to keep in mind that physical tasks don't exist in a bubble. During snack time, physical experiences link to social experiences. If a child spends most of snack time wiping up spilled water and struggling to use a cup independently, they will

have less attention available for social interactions. In my classroom this year, like last year, we have children with developmental variations that impact their motor planning and fine motor skills involved with tasks like self-serving and self-feeding during snack time. A central goal that I have for this project is to design a cup that can work for all of the children in my classroom, aligning with the principle of universal design.

Universal design calls for physical spaces and materials to be accessible to everyone. In an article from 2009, Thomas Hehir explains that,

By the 1990's, the concept of universal design, especially in architecture and in technology development, had begun to penetrate the culture. Disability policy, including the Assistive Technology Act, ensured that new technologies were being developed to be accessible for people with disabilities. Televisions included closed captioning capabilities, public buildings had curb cuts and automatic doors, and so forth. In light of these advancements, conversations began about how to apply universal design to education. (p. 3).

While particular materials are designed for specific developmental variations and for therapeutic use, the goal of universally designed materials and spaces is that they will not isolate children (or adults) with developmental variations. Rather, a universally designed space or material will accommodate everyone. Changes to a design that are intended to make a space accessible to people with developmental variations or disabilities have proven to actually be of benefit to all. For instance, curb cuts in sidewalks, intended to make sidewalks accessible to people using wheelchairs or walkers, are also helpful for people pushing a stroller or cart. Automatic doors at the grocery store make carrying out bags of groceries much easier, too. So, another layer of Universal Design is that there will

also be unintended benefits involved for more people than the designer may have originally had in mind.

When the concept of universal design became integrated into the field of special education, the term ‘universal design for learning’ was coined to include not only access to learning environments, but also “access to learning itself” (Hehir, p. 7). It is my intention that with this project I will create cups that not only entail the physical component of universal design, in being physically accessible by all children, but also contribute to universal design for learning. The role of the cups is not just for the physical act of drinking water, but also for the deeper underlying learning process of developing independence and self-care. Access to the physical act in this case is the foundation to accessing the deeper learning. As a designer, it is hard to imagine all the factors and variability that might need to be considered when making something accessible to everyone. Actually knowing the population for whom you are designing puts you at an advantage in terms of knowing what factors to consider. I feel that I’m in a unique position to actually attempt to create a cup that may fulfill the intention of universal design, as I know the children in my classroom so well.

Lastly, through this project I have made inquiries into what kinds of cups exist in other classrooms, in other schools. It has come to my attention that an astonishing number of early childhood centers consume and waste disposable plastic cups every single day. I believe that an early childhood environment should have a feeling of home to it, and should have a personal touch. Beyond the shameful abuse of our environment that the daily use of disposable plastic cups poses, I do also wonder if the use of disposable cups impacts a child’s feeling of belonging, and of settling in for a while into

a space. I am interested to see how the introduction of ceramic cups, which are handmade, thoughtfully designed, and aesthetically pleasing, will influence both children and adults in the classroom.

In addition to my reflection and research on the theoretical and real role of materials and design in early childhood learning, I am excited to be in the position of designer and maker through this project. I hope that through taking on this role I will deepen my awareness and understanding of the significance of design in early childhood education.

Design Process

It could be said that the design process for this project began as long ago as last fall, when I first discussed the search for the right cup with my colleagues at the nursery school. We talked about the pros and cons of different design ideas: a weighted bottom, two handles, one handle, no handles, an indentation for grasping, wide mouths, small mouths, wide bases, straight cylinders, etc. When I started considering the design of cups more seriously and concretely for this project, I began with some sketches. Over dinner with a friend of mine, who is a textile artist and an educator, we got into exploring different possible designs and how they might function.



Design ideas sketched on a napkin over dinner

After these brainstorming sessions, I got to work in the studio. I began by making a prototype of the top six designs that I thought seemed most promising. I brought these samples in to school and showed them to the school directors, and we sat and collaboratively discussed the potential advantages and disadvantages of each design. In the following pages, I will go through each cup and discuss the rationale and goals behind each design. Here is a visual glossary of the cups:



Cup A



Cup B



Cup C



Cup D



Cup E



Cup F

My idea behind *Cup A*, the two-handled cup, came from reflecting on how one handle accommodated all children's needs last year for pouring water from a pitcher, but one handle didn't quite support all children while drinking the water. One handle provides something to hold on to so that a child can easily steady the cup while pouring water into it. However, when it comes to drinking, it can be difficult to lift the cup by one handle so that it stays upright and does not fall sideways. Many children hold onto the other side of the cup or the bottom of the cup when drinking, but some children do not and their cups end up tipping sideways with the weight of the water, resulting in spills. My design for *Cup A* stems from this observation, and from the thought that it would be easier for all children to pick up a cup with two handles, rather than one, especially given that a ceramic cup is heavier in weight than the tin cups which we currently have in the classroom.

I also like the design of *Cup A* because the two handles make it really sturdy, and when your hands are on it you can't do anything else. It was my goal that a two-handled cup, by virtue of its design, would invite the child to intuitively grasp it with both hands, and therefore only concentrate on the act of drinking water while using the cup; thus potentially creating more mindfulness through engagement with a single task.

One potential negative aspect of this design that came up in discussion with my school directors is that it resembles a sippy-cup, which many two-year-olds are habituated to using at home. So, this design might look babyish to them and furthermore, children might not instinctively tip it to drink from it, since sippy cups don't require that effort from children as they have suction.

My idea behind the design for *Cup B*, the indented cup, was that the indentation in the middle would serve the purpose of having a clear place to hold on to, without the need for handles. In my opinion, this design has a nice feel to it. It's simple—you know where to put your hands, and the shape to me is aesthetically pleasing. When thinking about this cup's design, I thought that the indentation would both help a child to grip the cup in one hand while pouring water from the pitcher, and that it would also help the child grasp the cup while drinking water. In terms of universal design, I do think that the indentations would help all children have a clear place to grasp for support. However, as this cup doesn't have handles, I'm not sure if that would be a detrimental factor to its functionality for all children.

Cup C has a heavier bottom than the other cups that I designed. My idea behind this element of the design is that it would help the cup to stay upright, and result in fewer incidents of spilling. This cup is harder to tip over and even if it does tip, because of its weighted bottom, it tends to tip back to its center. With our current lightweight tin cups, children easily knock them down just by brushing against them. This cup is straight on all sides and has a nice, smooth feel to it. It is aesthetically pleasing, and looks like a small version of a cup that a grownup might use. However, it does not have indentations or handles for grasping onto, and it could even be too heavy for some children.






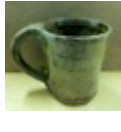
My main idea behind *Cup D*, the wide hourglass shaped cup, was that it would be very easy to hold. The indentation here is much deeper and more distinct than the indentation in *Cup B*. The cup is wide enough to invite the use of both hands to grasp it. The wide base also means that the cup is less likely to tip over. However, this width also means that it has a wide mouth, which could lead to less control when sipping and more

spilling. Additionally, when discussing this cup with my school directors, we talked about how it would be difficult to wash it. The bottom has these crevices due to the deep indentation in the middle of the cup, and food debris from snack could get in there and be difficult to clean out.

Cup E is of course very similar to *Cup D*; the main difference is that *Cup E* is both taller and narrower. Because it is narrower both on the bottom and top, this means that the mouth of the cup is more narrow and that could make it easier for children to drink from without spilling. However, a narrow base also means that the cup would be more likely to tip over and not stay firmly planted on the table. *Cup E* would certainly be easier to wash than *Cup D* because it doesn't have as distinctive indentations and crevices where debris might get stuck.

Cup F is the cup that most closely resembles our current one-handed tin cup. The main difference of course is that this one is handmade and has more weight to it as it is made from clay. In discussing this design with the school directors, we talked about how this cup looks like a small version of an adult cup and how children might respond well to it because it looks like their parents' coffee cups at home. It's familiar, but child-sized, like a lot of the things that children use at school— tables, chairs, sinks, toilets, utensils, etc. However, the one handle might present similar problems to the ones that I discussed regarding our current one-handed tin cups. The handle is useful and supportive when a child holds onto it to steady the cup as they pour water from a pitcher. However, there is not as much control when lifting it to drink. Of course, a child could support the cup with their other hand holding the bottom or side, but the design does not invite this action so it's not an intuitive way to use it.

After reviewing and discussing all of these cups, I decided to make a chart in order to organize visually how each cup compared to one another. I came up with a list of goals that I would like the design of the cup to fulfill, and charted which cups fulfilled those goals. Here is what I came up with:

Goals	Cup A 	Cup B 	Cup C 	Cup D 	Cup E 	Cup F 
Accommodates and supports all children as they pour water into the cup	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accommodates and supports all children as they drink from the cup	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Supports children's growth and sense of independence		✓	✓			✓
Aesthetically pleasing	✓	✓	✓			✓
Resistant to spills	✓		✓	✓		
Practical for teachers to clean everyday	✓	✓	✓			✓

After making this chart, I then tallied up the check marks for each cup, and found that *Cups A, B, and C* each scored 5, while *Cups D and E* both scored 3 and *Cup F* scored 4. I decided to get rid of *D* and *E* as options based on their clearly lower scores, and then I decided to also get rid of option *F* based on my own judgments and observations of the way the children were currently handling our one-handled tin cups. Next, I brought the three remaining cups into my classroom to test them out with the children and observe how they each functioned in the classroom context. I brought a few children at a time downstairs from our outdoor play space a little early for snack, and told them that I had different cups for them to use. I observed the way the children handled each cup.

It turned out that my idea that grasping the two handles on *Cup A* would be so intuitive was, in fact, not true. Some children did choose to use this cup by picking it up by both handles but most chose simply to pick it up by one handle, as if ignoring that there was another handle there at all. While holding one handle did indeed help to steady the cup as children poured water from a pitcher, it didn't seem as helpful in the act of drinking. I saw two main problems with this design as children drank their water. First, some treated it like a sippy cup and didn't fully lift and tip it to drink, and second, some lifted it by one handle and then held it sideways, mindlessly spilling water from it. It seemed that when children picked it up from only one handle, the weight of the handle on the other side of the cup pulled the cup sideways, resulting in water spilling out.

Cup C turned out to be a little too small in size. While it fit snugly into each child's hand, which allowed for ease of handling, this size also meant that the cup couldn't hold as much water as children wanted to drink.

While observing children's use of *Cup B*, I noticed that they instinctively placed their hands right at the center of the cup, in the grooves of the indentations, and lifted and tipped the cup to drink with both hands. They were all also able to grasp it with one hand while it rested on the table as they poured water from the pitcher. After observing the children use these three cups, I came to the conclusion that *Cup B* was the best design, and that I would add an element of *Cup C* to it, too, by making the bottom a bit thicker and more weighted to help ensure the cup's balance on the table. Now that I knew what design I wanted to go with, I was ready to get started on producing a set of cups in the pottery studio.

Pottery Process

As this is a hands-on and aesthetically oriented project, it only seems fitting to describe the process of making the cups visually, with the use of photographs. Also, as an educator, it only feels fitting to illustrate the process in a descriptive and clear way, with the hope that the reader might learn more about the pottery-making process. Below are photographs and descriptions of each step of the process, from wedging clay to getting the cup ready to be to be glaze fired in the kiln.



Step 1: Wedging the clay. The motion of wedging clay feels a bit like kneading dough. Working on a plaster surface with a large piece of clay, you pull up most of the piece of clay with both hands and then press forward and down into it, rock it back toward you, and press again. This motion needs to be repeated about one hundred times when recycling your own clay. You can see in this picture that there are layers of clay at the bottom. This is the result of wedging the clay back onto itself over and over. Wedging removes air bubbles and is a very important first step that really pays off in the end. Air bubbles in clay can lead to a pot going off center when throwing, or cracking when it's fired in the kiln. Without properly wedging your clay, you might end up with some very frustrating experiences at the wheel, with pots breaking or going off center all due to air bubbles.



Step 2: Cutting the clay with a wire tool. I use the wire to cut the clay into the size that I want to work with for each cup. While I could alternately tear chunks of clay off with my hands, I like to use the wire because it gives a clean, smooth cut and this is a way of double-checking for air bubbles. If there are any small holes in the smooth surface of the cut clay, then I know that I need to keep wedging to get rid of them.



Step 3: I prepare balls of clay of the same weight. I take the pieces that I've cut and pat them around in my hands, forming ball shapes. I prepare several at a time so that I can get to work on the wheel without repeating steps 1-3 every time I start a new pot. I select one ball of clay to start with for my first pot, and I cover the rest in plastic so they don't get dry.



Step 4: I place one ball of clay firmly onto the center of the wheel head.



Step 5: I start the wheel. With an electric wheel I simply leave it at a slow speed and take my foot off the pedal. I get the clay wet by dipping my hands into my slip bucket— a mixture of wet clay and water, and then I compress the clay slightly into the center of the wheel head with both of my hands. I lock my elbows at my hips to secure the steadiness of my hands.



Step 6: Coning-up the clay. This is part of the centering process, and another way to ensure that air bubbles work their way out. I press the clay upward and inward with my hands to make a cone shape.



Step 7: Pressing the clay back down to a mound. In this step, one hand presses down from the top and the other presses in from the side. This continues to center and compress the clay. I keep my hands interlaced to ensure that the clay remains centered. I repeat steps 6 and 7 two or three times until my clay is completely centered on the wheel.



Step 8: While steadying the clay with one hand from the side, with my elbow locked into my hip to ensure that this hand is steady, I press my other thumb directly downward into the center of the clay to make a hole. I don't press too far down, in order to leave a thicker and more weighted bottom.



Step 9: I widen the hole by steadying the side of the pot with one hand, and using my other hand to stretch the pot out, pulling toward 5 o'clock and dragging from the center

outward. I keep my hands interlaced, in order to ensure their steadiness. After widening the hole, I compress the bottom of the pot with two fingers. This helps to make sure there won't be any cracks at the base of the pot. I press two fingers firmly and gently into the base of the pot and drag them from the center to the outside, and then back again, in a slow, horizontal movement. I repeat this motion a few times.



Step 10: I begin the process of pulling up the walls of the pot. First, I lift up any excess clay that has formed at the base of the pot with my knuckle on the outside, and my other hand supporting the pot from the inside. Then I form a groove with my knuckle at the base. I will use this groove to place my knuckle in as I pull the clay up in the next step.



Step 11: I make my first pull. I pull the wall of the pot straight up, into a smooth, cylinder shape by leading with my inside hand pulling the clay gently straight up and my outside knuckle following and pulling up in tandem. Both of my hands at this point should be moving slowly and at the same pace, with the inside hand guiding the outside hand and with both hands gently pulling upward and against one another. The outside knuckle can apply more pressure during this first pull in order to really lift clay upward from the base, but should release pressure toward the top so that the rim doesn't get too thin.



Step 12: Making the second pull. This time instead of using a knuckle with my outside hand, I use my fingertips. This second pull is no longer about lifting the walls of the pot; it's about forming the desired shape of the pot. My fingertips allow for a more gentle touch as opposed to my knuckle, which helped to lift the bulk of the clay. Since I want an indentation in the middle, I use my inside hand to pull gently upward, guiding my outside hand as it follows upward and presses slightly inward. After the indentation has been

formed in the middle of the cup I let my outside hand relax in its pressure and pull the rest of the clay directly upward.



Step 13: I make a third and final pull upward, going over the shape that I made in the second pull. This step is really just about finessing the shape of the pot.



Here is the pot I am left with after the third and final pull!



Step 14: I use my right index finger to trim away the skirt of clay at the very base of the pot. There is a whole separate process for trimming pots, but with these small cups I actually don't need to trim at all because I am already making them the thickness and shape that I desire, and they are small enough to smooth out by hand. So this step is as much trimming as I will do with these cups.



Step 15: I use a sponge to get the pot a little drier before taking it off the wheel.



Step 16: I use this angled wooden tool to begin to lift the edges of the pot off of the wheel.



Step 17: I stretch the wire tool and drag it underneath the pot several times toward me to loosen it from the wheel.



Step 18: I use this tool to lift the pot, take it off of the wheel and place it on a separate bat.



Step 19: I leave the pots to dry until they are leather hard, then I smooth them a bit with a wet sponge, put my stamp on them, and they are ready to be bisque fired in the kiln.



Here is how the cups look when they come out of the bisque firing!



Step 20: After the cups have been bisque fired in the kiln, I turn them over and cover the bottoms with wax. This prevents glaze from dripping onto the bottom and getting stuck to the kiln shelf.



Step 21: I pick the glazes that I want to use and I mix them.



Step 22: I chose a clear glaze for the inside of the cup that the brown clay will show through. I use a pitcher to pour this glaze inside for one coat and then pour it out. I also chose to dip the lip of the cup in the clear glaze, too.



Step 23: I chose to dip the outside of the cups in a white glaze. I sponge off the bottom of the cups to make sure there aren't any drops of glaze. Now I'm finished glazing so I put the cups on the shelf for the glaze firing and wait for them to come out of the kiln!

Of course, the day-to-day process in the studio did not always follow this clear and structured path. It took me some time to get the technique down for creating the cup's shape, and it took me practice to be able to remember and replicate it. Each cup turned out a little different— none of them are precisely the same size or shape. There were days when I felt too tired to go to the studio and neglected some pots, resulting in a few pots getting too dry and hard to smooth out with a wet sponge. Sometimes, despite my best efforts at wedging, air bubbles popped up and threw my pots off center. Always, though, I felt grateful and nourished from my time at pottery. Clay is such a soothing medium and the process of throwing a pot is deeply satisfying.

Teachers as Artists

Throughout this project, while I have been connecting my practices in pottery and in teaching, I have also been reflecting on the overarching points of connection between teaching and making. In my reflections I have been playing with the idea of teachers as artists. As I discussed in my rationale behind making cups for the classroom, a significant part of our role as teachers is selecting materials and designing our classroom spaces. This is one way of conceptualizing teaching as an art— there is an art to thoughtful design of a space and thoughtful selection of materials. As teachers in inclusion settings, we have an opportunity to bring in materials that can fulfill diverse functional needs as well as aesthetic needs.

Another way of conceptualizing teaching as an art can be found in thinking about how teachers create meaningful learning experiences and how there is an art to that practice. In this section I will investigate *Experience and Education* by John Dewey, a text that delves into our role, as educators, in laying the groundwork for educative experiences. I will also consider *On Design* by Anni Albers, a text that offers Albers' reflections and her philosophy on designing. I see parallels between Albers' ideas about making art, Dewey's ideas about experience and education, and my own ideas about teaching and making that fuel my vision of teachers as artists.

Dewey asserts that there is an organic connection between education and personal experience and he clarifies his point by distinguishing between experiences that are educative and experiences that are mis-educative (Dewey, 1938). While many voices in the field of early childhood education advocate for experiential learning, Dewey writes, "It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even of activity in experience. Everything depends upon the *quality* of the experience which is had" (Dewey,

p. 27). While Dewey argues for the central role of experience in education, he attaches value to experience depending upon its quality.

In order to determine the value of experience, Dewey lays out two guiding principles that clarify the nature of experience and what it means for experiences to be educative. These two principles are *continuity* and *interaction*. The principle of continuity has to do with how an experience relates to growth and growing. Dewey writes, “The educative process can be identified with growth when that is understood in terms of the active participle, *growing*” (Dewey, p. 36). Growth needs to be understood as a continual *process* of growing, not as an end state to be achieved. How does an experience facilitate a process of growing? This is an important question to ask of an experience in order to determine its educative value. Dewey writes, “Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into” (Dewey, p. 38). According to Dewey, for an experience to be educative, this concept of continuity—considering how a present experience will affect the future in an ongoing process of growing—must be taken into account.

The second guiding principle that Dewey considers essential to educative experience is the principle of interaction. He writes about the interplay between the objective conditions and internal conditions of an experience and argues, “An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at that time, constitutes his environment” (Dewey, p. 44). Dewey elaborates on what he means by *environment*, stating, “The environment, in other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had” (p. 44). Dewey posits the notion that it is the balanced *interaction* between

these two forces— internal conditions of the individual and external conditions of the environment— that comprise an educative experience.

As educators, our role in facilitating educative experiences involves awareness of continuity and interaction. When considering continuity, Dewey asserts that educators must organize “the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (Dewey, p. 28). In terms of interaction, Dewey writes that while the internal conditions of an individual are beyond an educator’s power to control, the objective conditions are within the educator’s power and sphere of responsibility to control. He writes, “The individual, who enters as a factor into [an experience] is what he is at a given time. It is the other factor, that of objective conditions, which lies to some extent within the possibility of regulation by the educator” (Dewey, p. 45). Dewey notes that the concept of objective conditions covers a wide range. He writes,

It includes what is done by the educator and the way in which it is done, not only words spoken but the tone of voice in which they are spoken. It includes equipment, books, apparatus, toys, games played. It includes the materials with which an individual interacts, and, most important of all, the total social setup of the situations in which a person is engaged.” (p. 45).

According to Dewey, our role as educators in creating educative experiences involves the way that we create the objective conditions that interact with children’s internal states during experiences. It also involves a deep understanding of the internal states of the children we teach, in order to know where they are at and what kinds of environing factors would be conducive to educative experiences.

In concluding his discussion of the criteria for educative experience, Dewey writes, “Continuity and interaction in their active union with each other provide the measure of the educative significance and value of an experience” (Dewey, p. 45). My process of designing and making cups involves considering continuity and interaction. I consider how drinking from a handmade real cup will live fruitfully in subsequent experiences— how it will promote independence, self-confidence, mindfulness, and care. I also consider what design can best interact with the capacities, needs, and internal conditions of the children. According to Dewey, our responsibility as teachers involves synthesizing the principles of continuity and interaction as we design, plan, and facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Some might say that this task is a science, because it involves navigating many variables and includes a continuous cycle of planning and assessing. I like the idea of teachers as scientists, but I’m more drawn toward the analogy of teachers as artists. Teaching involves navigating the unpredictable since we are dealing with spontaneous living human beings, and I see this as more of an art. Skillfully facilitating experiences, setting and shifting tone, and improvising from moment to moment with children involves intuition and sensing, not scientific precision.

In *On Designing*, Albers writes with deep thoughtfulness about her work with materials. She reflects on it from a cultural, practical, philosophical and personal lens. Her reflections on her work as an artist and designer resonate with aspects of teaching. Albers writes, “The good designer is the anonymous designer, so I believe, the one who does not stand in the way of the material; the one who sends his products on their way to a useful life without an ambitious appearance” (1961, p. 7). I think this is such a lovely idea. I have the impression that the designer acting in this way is truly generous in her

work. This description of the role of the designer bares much resemblance to how I view the role of the teacher as facilitator of children's learning experiences. Just as Albers believes that designers should not stand in the way of the material, and rather, serve a more behind-the-scenes role, I believe a skillful teacher is one who has the ability to subtly facilitate learning experiences that create space for growth without taking up too much space herself. Dewey touches on this in *Experience and Education* when he writes, "The adult can exercise the wisdom his own wider experience gives him without imposing a merely external control" (p. 38). There is an art to structuring and offering a learning experience from within the child's realm, rather than from without, in a non-imposing way.

Albers also writes about how working with materials involves a lot of unknown, and how that calls for good listening. She writes,

We come to know in art work that we do not clearly know where we will arrive in our work, although we set the compass, our vision; that we are led, in going along, by material and work process. We have plans and blueprints, but the finished work is still a surprise. We learn to listen to voices: to the yes or no of our material, our tools, our time. We come to know that only when we feel guided by them our work takes on form and meaning, that we are misled when we follow only our will. (p. 31).

As teachers, we, like artists, may have a direction that we aim to head in— we set plans for curriculum and goals for our children's development, but the results are not completely within our control since we are dealing with human life in all its potential for surprise. Just as Albers writes that her work is more meaningful when she does not

impose her own will but lets her materials and tools guide her, our work as teachers is also more meaningful when we fully listen to the children— to their behavior and nonverbal communication— instead of simply imposing our own agenda in a disconnected way. Albers' idea here calls to my mind Dewey's principle of interaction. Albers is essentially writing about the interaction between the artist and the material and the importance of the artist's plans and vision coming into alignment with, and being guided by, the material.

Both Dewey and Albers also write indirectly about the importance of inclusion in teaching and designing, in a way that speaks to my own views on inclusion. Although Dewey did not use this term 'inclusion' in his writing, I found that his principle of interaction touched on the concept of differentiation, a key aspect of inclusion. In his discussion of interaction, Dewey writes, "Responsibility for selecting objective conditions carries with it, then, the responsibility for understanding the needs and capacities of the individuals who are learning at a given time (Dewey, 1938, p. 45)." Dewey goes on to discuss the responsibility of the educator to adapt objective conditions to the needs and capacities of individuals. Albers also writes about design in a way that poignantly captures an inclusive approach. She writes, "Having fewer things sets for the designer or craftsman a fundamentally new task, as it implies designing things for more inclusive use. His attitude will have to be changed...to being quietly helpful" (p. 60). Although Albers is writing from the perspective of addressing over-consumption and advocating for having fewer possessions, her idea here reflects the mindset of universal design in inclusion classrooms. In inclusion classrooms, especially when we try to have one set of necessary items like chairs, or cups, the design must allow for inclusive use. I

love Albers' idea of a design being quietly helpful. For me, this speaks of the aesthetic aspect of the design. Perhaps, for instance, a cup needs to serve a certain function such as allowing a person to easily hold it. The form that allows for this function, in my opinion, ideally should not be designed solely on functionality, but also should be based on an aesthetic quality that is pleasing and that does not call too much attention to its helpfulness.

Discovering connections between Dewey's writing on experiential education and Albers' writing on art and design strengthens my vision of teaching as an art. With more research into both Dewey's and Albers' lives, it is apparent that a connection between their ideas is no coincidence. Both thinkers were involved in the founding of Black Mountain College, the experimental arts-based college that formed in 1933 in North Carolina. Strongly based on Dewey's principles of progressive education, Black Mountain College sought to educate the whole student, and Anni Albers and her husband Josef Albers, renowned artist, educator and color theorist, were some of the first art teachers brought to the school. There is a rich history of overlap between progressive education and the arts, one that I believe progressive education today could benefit from remembering.

Up to this point the connections that I have been weaving between Albers' writing on making, Dewey's ideas on experience, and my own ideas on teaching and making, have primarily been theoretical; I see a philosophical overlap in a certain disposition toward both children and materials. I also want to explore the connections between teaching and art in a more concrete way and think further about how teachers might benefit from engaging in artistic practices. I think that my own arts experiences have

given me opportunities to look closely, develop an experimental attitude, trust my intuition, be an attuned listener of nonverbal communication, improvise, and develop patience. I think all of these skills come into play when working with young children.

In *On Designing*, Albers delves into discussing artistic education, and what can be learned from art experiences. Albers writes,

Material, that is to say unformed or unshaped matter, is the field where authority blocks independent experimentation less than in many other fields, and for this reason it seems well fitted to become the training ground for invention and free speculation... most important to one's own growth is to see oneself leave the safe ground of accepted conventions and to find oneself alone and self-dependent. It is an adventure which can permeate one's whole being. Self-confidence can grow (p. 51).

I agree with Albers' idea that working with unstructured materials can allow space for exploration and one's own personal growth of self-reliance and confidence. Albers also discusses how making choices as an artist working with materials leads to the development of inner awareness and trust in one's own intuition (p. 51). As a teacher, it is so important to have a sense of your own authority and intuitive approach to matters.

Albers also describes another important aspect of learning through making art. She writes, "We learn patience and endurance in following through a piece of work. We learn to respect material in working it" (p. 33). It seems to me that patience, endurance, and respect for children are three fundamental qualities that comprise good teaching. I would argue that experience with art making could contribute to the development of these qualities in teachers.

On another note, I often wonder how teachers can be expected to create vibrant, hands-on, and meaningful learning experiences for children unless they themselves are also in touch with being in the position of the learner and doer. I think that if we are going to be responsible for laying the groundwork for children to have those kinds of experiences, we have to remain creatively active and inspired ourselves. Albers suggests that art is a necessary touchstone for learning to *do*:

If we want to learn to do, to form, we have to turn to art work, and more specifically to craft work as part of it. Here learning and teaching are directed toward the development of our general capacity to form. They are directed toward the training of our sense of organization, our constructive thinking, our inventiveness and imagination, our sense of balance in form— toward the apprehension of principles such as tension and dynamics... the long list of faculties which finally culminate in a creative act, or, more specifically in a work of art (p. 30).

As teachers, we, too, are in the process of forming. We are forming educative experiences, we are forming the classroom environment, and we are shaping the development of the children we teach. Perhaps engaging in art making can compliment our task as teachers as we form and shape the experiences and development of the children who we teach. Furthermore, I believe that in order to really understand the point of view of the children that we teach, we need to be in touch with the stance of the learner. I don't see a better way to do this than to remain engaged and active learners and makers ourselves.

Conclusion: Observations and Reflection

After the cups went into the kiln, I found myself overtaken with worries and doubts, imagining that the cups were going to turn out way too small. Pots shrink considerably in the kiln, so it is a valid concern. I had nearly convinced myself that I was going to have to re-make all of them. However, thankfully, the cups turned out just fine.



When I brought them into the classroom for the first time, I didn't introduce them with any kind of announcement, I just put them out at snack time when children asked for water. Most of the children commented on the fact that there were new cups and many asked where the other cups went. One child exclaimed, "Special cups!" as she held her cup in her hands. Another child asked, "Why do we have these funny cups?" Another child asked, "Why is her cup bigger?" Most of the children took a brief moment to notice their cup and turn it over in their hands. After a few days of getting used to the cups, one child sighed, "I love my cup."

It was fascinating to watch the way the children responded to the cups. I noticed that when they poured water from the pitcher into the cup, children didn't even need to hold the cup to steady it. The weight of the cup itself held it firmly on the table. This is such a marked difference from the tin and yellow cups, which would tip over from just

the slightest brush. I also noticed that the height of the cup is significantly lower than the height of the pitcher. This was an unintended outcome, and it means that pouring water from the pitcher simply requires the children to lift the pitcher slightly and tilt it toward the cup, whereas with the tin one-handed cups, children needed to lift the pitcher higher to crest the top of the cup, which required more motor planning, balance, and control.



In addition to the motor planning involved with pouring water into the old cups, teachers also often had to give children direct instruction and reminders to steady the cup with one hand while pouring with the other. With my cup, all of the children were able to pour water independently and figured out how to do so on their own without any teacher instruction.

In terms of drinking the water, I noticed that several children drank from the cup using only one hand to hold the cup, and some chose to hold it with two. Watching the children drink from the cup, I thought they looked more grown up and at ease with this material. I think a lot of it really comes down to the weightedness and realness of the material of the ceramic cup. In one week of snack-time, I only observed one spill, which occurred when a child knocked her cup over while reaching for the snack basket. The cup didn't break, so I'm pleased with how sturdy they are. I am especially pleased that all of the children in the class were able to use the cups independently. I feel that these cups

achieve an aesthetically satisfying form and a functional design. The cups fulfill the goal of a universal design for the children in my inclusion classroom, and they also fulfill the goal of a material that allows for learning independence while simultaneously providing an aesthetic experience.

Amazingly, children seem to intuitively sense that this cup requires more care. This is something that I had imagined might happen, as I wrote about in my rationale on making these cups, and my belief was affirmed when I brought the cups to the classroom. When children are finished with snack, the routine is that they clean up their areas by carrying their cups over to the tray by the sink. With the old cups, children would often hurry over to the tray and toss the cup on top, sometimes dropping it to the floor. With my cups, children held them with both hands and walked so slowly and so carefully over to the tray, watching their steps and the cup the whole time. They then placed them gently onto the tray to complete the job. It's amazing how children can sense the care that the ceramic cup compels from them, and it is my hope that they feel a sense of care from the cup, too. I didn't explain that they were handmade, or that I made them, because I just wanted to observe how they would react without any information. I feel that providing cups that I labored over in my own quiet time in the studio to the children in my classroom gives me a new sense of connection to the children. It's akin to the way I connected with my family when I first brought pots home to use at meals, and how I feel now when friends come over and eat from my pots— just a feeling of quiet connection beyond words, when the act of making and sharing a gift speaks for itself.



This project has had a few layers to it: designing and making the cups and then bringing them into the classroom, researching and reflecting on the role of the environment and materials in early childhood inclusion education, and discovering points of connection between teaching and art. Reading some historical texts in the field of education and design were illuminating to me. Discovering resonance between my own ideas and those of Montessori, Dewey, and Albers made me feel more closely connected to the history of progressive education. I now find myself in my late stages of editing this paper, perusing Bank Street College's digital archives and reading Lucy Sprague Mitchell and Harriet Johnson's writing. It seems like a good note to leave off on, to go back to the origins and let some of Bank Street's early voices echo here as a final point of reflection for this project.

In a draft letter to the editor of the New York Times, following the death of John Dewey, Lucy Sprague Mitchell wrote of Dewey,

So thoroughly has his thinking and his credo infiltrated our culture that the present generation hardly know where their beliefs started. Those of us of the older generation, however, remember how revolutionary it seemed to a world that believed in learning by memorizing what others think when John Dewey spoke of "learning by doing" (Mitchell, 1952).

It is easy to take this notion of learning by doing for granted. I found that revisiting Dewey's *Experience & Education* and linking it to Albers' *On Designing* has helped me to form a deeper appreciation of this idea of learning by doing and learning through experience. Learning by doing is a concept that is so easily tossed around now. I think it's important to return to the original source of this idea and really grasp its meaning. Lucy

Sprague Mitchell was deeply influenced by Dewey, and thus was the founding of Bank Street. It's so important for Bank Street students today to continue to be aware of Dewey's legacy and the ideals of progressive education.

Another archival document that I found significant to this project was a progressive teachers radio talk from 1931 by Harriet Johnson, Lucy Sprague Mitchell's co-founder of the Bureau of Educational Experiments. In her talk she discussed the education of teachers in training. The radio transcript reads,

The teacher needs first of all to see children. She needs to see them primarily as active doers; to understand that at all ages doing is a force for growing if it is controlled and directed by the individual in action; she needs to study the impulses that dominate children at different periods and to recognize whether their drive is native or the result of adult influence. Second, she needs to realize children's powers, the scope of their ability to handle problems, whether concerned with everyday living or more narrowly intellectual. Third, she needs to appreciate that children are essentially artists and that it is the process of the creative use of materials rather than the resulting product that is important in growth. Beyond all this she needs to have resources at her command so that she can carry an experimental attitude toward the work she is doing and can be ready to regard the opinions she holds as subject to change if her own growth or further experiences lead her to modify them. It is this that makes teaching a continuously learning process. It is not a process of fixed knowing but of finding out. How can a teacher learn these things more vividly than by living in an environment which opens to her opportunities to test her own powers, to pursue lines of investigation

in various fields, to try out for herself some form of art expression? (Johnson, 1931)

Harriet Johnson's thoughts in 1931 speak to my thoughts today. It was affirming to read this radio transcript after writing the bulk of this thesis. Clearly, the notion that teachers can grow through experiences in art has been around for quite some time. The fact that this idea goes right back to the roots of Bank Street makes me feel that it really is something worth pushing forward in the field.

On a closing note, I think that it is worth mentioning that my final design for the cup stemmed from a mistake. While apprenticing at Jane's pottery, I set out to practice making a beaker for the first time. A beaker is a cup that angles slightly outward from the base; it is a popular drinking cup in England. With the freedom to explore and make mistakes— of which I made many, I eventually learned how to make a beaker on a kick wheel. The first one that I saved turned out to be a small, indented cup. While it didn't make for the best beaker, it turned out to be quite a good design for a cup for very young children.



--- END ---

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Appendix: Permission Letter

On Tue, Feb 11, 2014 at 11:01 PM, Molly Alexander [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Jane Herold,

I am writing to ask for your formal permission to include your full name as well as a photograph of your pottery in my Master's thesis for Bank Street College of Education. In this thesis I include a reflective description of my experience working with you. My thesis will be submitted as a PDF to the Bank Street Library where it will be catalogued as part of the Library collection and downloadable via a live link on the catalog entry.

Thank you so much, Jane!

Sincerely,
Molly Alexander

On Feb 12, 2014, at 2:59 PM, Jane Herold [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Molly Alexander,
You are welcome to include my name and photographs of my pottery in your Master's thesis for Bank Street College of Education.
Sincerely,
Jane Herold