



Art Education as Environmental Activism in Pre-Service Teacher Education

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Abstract:

This presentation explores how art and design education can contribute to the imperative of climate change and help societies adapt to living more sustainably. Drawing on methods from arts-based research and qualitative case study, it reports on a study that investigates what can be learned from creating environmental art installations with pre-service teachers (those training to be K-12 teachers) as part of environmental art education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Data collection methods used in this study are two-fold. The arts-based research methods include journaling, photography and the creation of installations from environmental art-making experiences. Traditional qualitative methods include anonymous online surveys, semi-structured interviews and feedback forms on art workshops. Findings suggest that preservice teachers experience attitudinal and behavioural shifts towards sustainability after engaging in the processes of creating environmental art. Involvement in the workshops also provided opportunities for building community, engaging multiple domains of learning, modeling sustainable art-making practices and prompting environmental activism. Overall, connecting environmental issues with arts-based pedagogy through environmental and sustainability education (ESE) may inspire art educators to reflect on their responsibility to

advance climate action and consider what role(s) they can play in environmental activism inside and outside of their educational institutions. This presentation explores how the study adds a new dimension to the current literature because of its focus on generalist pre-service teachers and pedagogical strategies that engage those with little background in art education. The results of this study inform a developing pedagogy for environmental art education in higher education settings.

Keywords: art education; environmental and sustainability education; teacher education; preservice; environmental art-making; climate change

Biographical Notes

Hilary Inwood is a teacher educator, researcher, and artist who leads the *Environmental & Sustainability Education Initiative* at OISE, University of Toronto. Her research focuses on developing teachers' knowledge and skills in environmental literacy and environmental art education, extending beyond classrooms into school gardens, outdoor centres, parks and galleries.

Alysse Kennedy is a doctoral candidate at OISE, University of Toronto, and an occasional teacher with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Her research investigates meaningful pedagogical approaches to teaching about the environment in accessible, relevant ways. She helps to coordinate professional learning for OISE's *Environmental & Sustainability Education Initiative*.