

## Response to Zimmerman's Article

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What impressed me with Enid Zimmerman's essay entitled, *What Should Research Tell Us About Multicultural Art Education Practices?: A Personal Perspective*, was the way she began the essay—not with the usual theoretical and philosophical inquiry into art education research, but with a serious dose of real world, *in your face*, perspective on the environment in which we live, teach, and grow. Today's art educators are faced with the *confrontation of two worlds*—that of the social environment versus the teaching environment.

In her essay, Zimmerman looks at some of the issues surrounding race and art, specifically, the examination of art education for its potential to unlock some of the fears and intolerance associated with culture and race. This focus advocates going beyond relating cultural diversity to multicultural art through school curricula, textbooks, and instructional methodologies. Although this step is an important (and necessary) start in our attempt to create a discipline that is inclusive in the areas of race, gender, and ethnicity, effecting change in our students and communities should be the long term goal that we strive to achieve.

Zimmerman's essay challenges art educators to risk the safety of meeting curricular diversity requirements and move onto the application stage where we can make a difference not only in teaching content, but in the lives and attitudes of our students. The difference can also extend to communities and can lead to national and global impact. Zimmerman asks art educators to examine whether teaching about cultural similarities and differences and exploring art from different cultures will make a difference in how students view themselves and others in their communities and the larger world. We are also asked whether learning about art through a variety of cultural contexts promotes understanding and tolerance for diversity.

The questions Zimmerman poses in her essay are powerful and challenging in that they focus on and require out of classroom experiences in order to bring about attitudinal and communal solutions and changes. The questions also translate into recommendations needed for future art education research. Three of Zimmerman's most significant questions are:

- 1) Have we begun, through our teaching, to promote social action positions in communities in which we teach, where problems involving racism, sexism, and inequity are stressed as much as teaching social values?
- 2) Are art educators taking into consideration student ethnicity and cultural backgrounds when assessing and evaluating student learning and the art program?
- 3) Is there sufficient research to demonstrate that teaching art from multicultural and social reconstructivist points of view can make a difference in that students are led to take action that can effect change in their schools, communities and society as a whole?

These questions and others raised by Zimmerman suggest what research should tell us about multicultural art education practices.

The essay closes with Zimmerman's appeal for us to convince opponents of "diversity and equity programs at all levels" of art education, that these programs can and do make a positive difference. Zimmerman's essay shares her personal perspective on what research should tell us about multicultural art education practices. What is more important, it challenges us to examine our own personal and professional perspectives on how to affect changes needed in our selves, students, society, and the global community.