

Arts Education in Jeopardy

Research Reveals the Challenges and Resilience of Arts Education and Arts Educators During and Following the Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic shut down the world and arts education. Performing arts classes across the world were labeled as deadly activities and banned for in-person instruction and experiences in schools and communities for months. Strict mandates were enforced for masking students and social distancing. Restrictions for talking, singing, playing instruments, dancing, touching, ventilation, sharing equipment and resources in visual, performing, and media arts, and group activities associated with arts education were daunting. The arts have been described as a universal language that celebrates and honors culture, diversity, ethnicity, inclusion, and individual authenticity, as well as basic education in the United States. Consequently, the impact of pandemic mandates resulted in social, emotional, and psychological trauma for those affected, as people are born to dance, sing, act, create, make music, and play—individually and collectively. How have arts educators, students, and programs survived with resilience during this unprecedented time in history?

Keywords: arts education, pandemic, dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts, social emotional learning (SEL)

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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Arts Education in Jeopardy—Research Reveals the Challenges and Resilience of Arts Education and Arts Educators During and Following the Pandemic

This article shares the results of the third qualitative survey, conducted by this researcher, regarding the impact of the pandemic on arts education, from May 2020 through May 2021, and entitled: *What is the future of arts education? What have we learned since spring 2020? Spring 2021 survey, N = 115*. This article is unique in the reporting of all ten survey questions in one, and as it was presented in a video presentation regarding the data for Seattle Pacific University's (SPU) *15th Annual Symposium: Educational Innovations around the World*. The title emulates the current state of arts education as reported in the first person and entitled *Arts Education in Jeopardy—Research Reveals the Challenges and Resilience of Arts Education and Arts Educators during and following the Pandemic* (Joseph, 2021a).

Background

Research abounds via quantitative and qualitative studies about arts education and academic achievement; albeit most were non-replicable prior to the pandemic due to research designs, costs of researchers, grants, and professional development, or inadequate research processes (Joseph, 2014, 2019). The pandemic has created additional challenges to research about the effects of arts education and how it correlates to academic and personal achievement, due to the inability to observe students and teachers with consistency and in classrooms. Education and educating in the past twenty months, including how and where one learns and who is doing the teaching is currently provided in ways thought unimaginable (Joseph, 2020a, 2020b). Ongoing and daily anecdotal evidence from first person reporting of arts educators in all five arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts) reports and suggests that arts education remains essential, arts education is education, arts education is a part of basic

education, and arts education can enhance most students regarding their social, emotional, physical, and academic learning; as well as, being included in Washington State and Federal laws and policies for a well-rounded education for the whole child (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2020, 2021b).

Although arts education, by law, is considered an essential part of basic education, this survey revealed that the pandemic thrust arts education, arts educators, and access to arts education in schools in jeopardy and unlike anything in past history; whereas arts education classes, especially the performing arts (dance, music, and theatre), were some of the first classes to be discontinued, and are some of the last to be reinstated, if at all. Yet, arts education and educators were and remain resilient, persevering, determined, hopeful, creative, and dedicated to teaching their students a love of learning with and through the arts as the survey responses reveal (Joseph, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d).

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to share the results of this third qualitative survey regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on arts education, from May 2020 through May 2021, and entitled: *What is the future of arts education? What have we learned since Spring 2020? Spring 2021 Survey*. The framework of the qualitative research study revolved around three consistent questions and concerns of arts educators pre-school through university and graduate school, and follow:

1. How do we move forward into the future in an ever-changing education landscape governed, at this time, by the pandemic?
2. How is arts education being taught?

3. How do arts educators in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts teach subject areas that thrive with “in-person” educational settings, and have been delivered for months via virtual formats and methods while in the midst of a world-wide pandemic and ever-changing mitigation requirements?

Survey Design

The ten-question survey was conducted during May 2021, receiving 115 respondents. Questions one through nine were required and all respondents answered all nine questions. Question ten was optional and answered by 56 respondents or almost half. There were seven selected responses and three constructed responses. Selected responses are reported as figures with pie charts and bar graphs and constructed responses are reported as figures with word clouds. Responses from all sectors of state, national, and international participants were voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. The Washington Art Education Association (WAEA) was the host for the survey. State and national arts organizations in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts, including higher education and arts advocacy groups were invited to participate via organizational email, personal invitations during organizational events, and through the WAEA Facebook group. National arts education leadership organizations including the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE), Arts Education Partnership (AEP), as well as the Washington State arts advocacy organization ArtsEdWashington, also invited their members to participate.

Background

This was the third survey hosted by the WAEA from May 2020-May 2021, to capture what was happening with arts education during the pandemic and in real-time. The first survey was presented at the Seattle Pacific University (SPU) International Symposium 2020 and

published in the International Dialogues on Education (IDE) Special Issue 2020, regarding the future of education (Joseph, 2020a, 2020b).

As referenced earlier, arts education is basic education in Washington State, with state and national standards for dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts, performance assessments in each subject, and a part of the annual reporting of instruction and instructional opportunities for all students on state education reports (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards [NCCAS], 2014; OSPI, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2021a; Washington State Legislature [WSL], 2004/2006/2011). Further, two credits in the arts are a part of Washington State's high school graduation requirements (WSL, 2014).

Even though arts education is basic, essential, part of state and national arts education law and policy, the future of arts education remains in jeopardy, yet hopeful. Visionary plans remain in place for state of the art and world class professional development and learning for teachers of the arts, and opportunities for the federal government Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to retain and enhance arts education and educators in multiple pathways that address basic education and social and emotional learning for all ages and levels of students (National Association for Music Education [NAfME], 2021).

It is noteworthy that the survey revealed that arts educators who responded remain hopeful and resilient in the face of trauma, and an unknown journey. Their persistence, willingness to adapt, creativity, flexibility, and determination to survive and even thrive, have been inspirational and socially and emotionally encouraging to their students and colleagues alike. Their honest and authentic responses, in their own words via constructive responses regarding their individual teaching and learning environments, revealed the pandemic as a crisis surrounded by opportunities known and unknown.

Historical Underpinnings for Arts Education

Students and adults learn by doing. Arts education, by nature, is the education of doing via creating, performing, presenting, producing, responding, reflecting, and connecting, and in three main strands. Those strands being arts for “art’s” sake, integrated arts, and arts in the content areas – birth through life (Joseph, 2014, 2019; Edwards, 1986; Eisner, 1992; Ellis & Fouts, 2001; NCCAS, 2014). Additionally, arts education has been a subject area that is taught in person. The art student and the art educator form a relationship via an interactive process, argued by John Dewey in his many writings about education and learning as social and interactive processes; whereas the school itself is a social institution through which social reform can and should take place, and where art is taught as experience (Dewey, 1900 & 1902/1990, 1916, 1934, 1938).

Erik Erikson developed a philosophy and theory of psycho-social theory, where meaningful relationships and relevant social interactions birth through life were essential to a whole and balanced person, with childhood, school, teachers, friends, neighborhoods, achievement and accomplishment, adolescent, peers, groups, work and social life—all of which were shuttered during the pandemic yet are critical to one’s well-being and development (Erikson, 1950/1963).

The CASEL model of social and emotional learning further validates Dewey, Erikson, and others in stressing the importance of how school allows people to develop in ways that will assist them in success in their personal and professional practices and areas of calling (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020).

Arts education naturally, authentically, and intentionally provides relationships through the artistic processes of creating, performing, presenting, producing, responding, reflecting, and

connecting—fostering relevance and rigor in learning that has lasting and life-long positive effects, as well as meaning and transfer to all cultures. Social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential elements of arts education—connecting learning around the world via dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts through individual and collaborative processes and experiences. Social-emotional learning is at the heart of arts education (CASEL, 2020; Petrokubi, Bates, & Malinis, 2019)

Survey Questions

The ten survey questions follow, and will be explored and illustrated with pie charts, bar graphs, word clouds, and commentary of the 115 respondents.

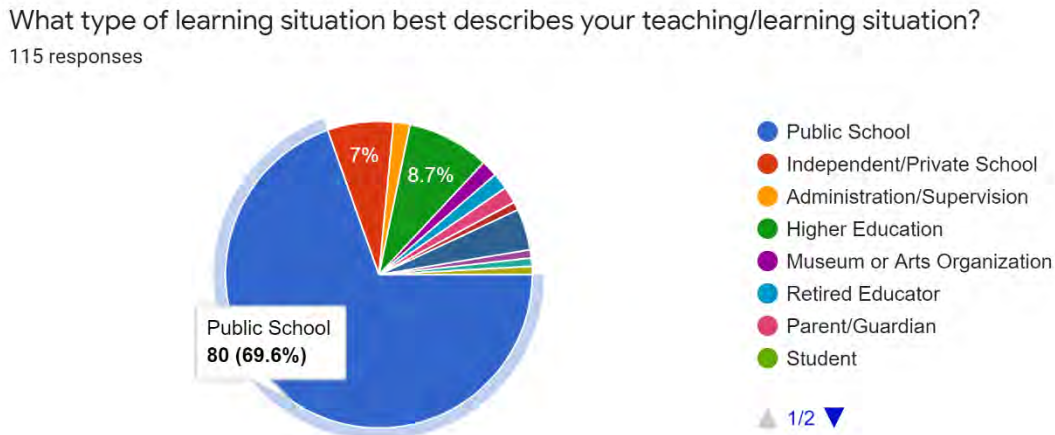
1. What type of learning situation best describes your teaching/learning situation?
2. What level of students do you work with? Or, if a student, what level are you? If you teach more than one level, which level to you most identify with?
3. What do you see (your vision) as the future of arts education? How do we move forward?
4. What role is technology playing in your teaching/learning at this time?
5. Please describe what and how you are teaching in your current teaching position? Please describe what your teaching position is expected to be next year?
6. How are you assessing your students? Please be specific to your current quarter/trimester situation/position. Check all that apply.
7. Which virtual platforms are you (or have you) been using to teach your students/children? Check all that apply and add additional choices in the 'Other' choice.
8. What are the biggest challenges you are facing during this time of online (or hybrid) learning? Check all that apply.

9. What are you doing to create and/or maintain your personal mental and physical health, as well as work and personal life balance during this past year of educational change due to the pandemic?
10. Optional Question: Is there anything else you would like to share about your teaching, arts education, and/or education in general at this time?

Question one: What type of learning situation best describes your teaching/learning situation?

Figure 1.

Pie chart describing teaching/learning situations of survey respondents



Note: N=115.

This pie chart illustrates that public school teachers represented 69.6% of those responding or $n=80$ respondents. An $n=10$ respondents were from higher education, followed by an $n=8$ for independent or private school, $n=5$ for teaching artists, and an $n=2$ participants or less

accounted for the remaining categories of museum or arts organization, administration or supervision, retired educator, and parent or guardian.

Question two: What level of students do you work with? Or, if a student, what level are you? If you teach more than one level, which level to you most identify with?

Figure 2.

Pie chart describing grade levels taught of the survey respondents

What level of students do you work with? Or, if a student, what level are you? If you teach more than one level, which level to you most identify with?

115 responses



Note: N=115.

Many educators teach more than one level, and this question asked them to select the level they most identified with. The respondent numbers are reported here to identify the percentages, further illustrating the traditional and alternative grade level combinations that are current assignments for educators. High school teachers represented 33.9% or $n=39$, followed by elementary at 19.1% or $n=22$. Middle school teachers represented 13% or $n=15$, followed by higher education at 11.3% or $n=13$. Combination grade levels included $n=9$ for middle and high school combined and $n=7$ for kindergarten through grade twelve (senior in high school). An $n=2$

or less for nine constructed response answers described their positions as: elementary and middle school; middle, high school and adults; pre-school; pre-school through graduate school and adult education and professional development; home school; adults with developmental disabilities; pre-school through fifth grade; community; pre-school through graduate school consultant.

Question three: What do you see (your vision) as the future of arts education? How do we move forward?

Figure 3.

Word cloud illustrating what and how respondents envisioned and predicted arts education in the future



Note: N=115.

Question three was the first constructed response on the survey, and one of the most illuminating to read, as all 115 respondents provided some sort of reply and vision—some being long, and others being a sentence or two, and how the respondent envisioned and predicted moving forward. Responses were all over the spectrum, some positive, and others negative—and it appears to many respondents that arts education is in jeopardy and at stake. The larger the word appears in a word cloud means that it was written more often. This word cloud highlights that respondents overwhelmingly felt that arts classes will remain an important and needed essential subject area for all students, and that arts education will survive—arts for “art’s” sake, integrating the arts, arts in the content areas or interdisciplinary arts, and arts as social and emotional learning (SEL) and therapy to help students overcome the known and unknown trauma that the pandemic thrust upon education and schools (Edwards, 1986; Eisner, 1992; Ellis & Fouts, 2001; OSPI, 2021b).

There is hope and belief for the future of arts education as education moves forward. There is an acute awareness that things have changed, and that arts education is important, essential, needed, and a therapeutic strategy that is essential to teach, heal, and enhance students, educators, education, and parents as they move through this crisis and into opportunity. Private, public, homeschool, incarcerated, home-hospital, and students in alternative learning settings experienced arts education during the pandemic, and it was reported as a favorite time of learning by many if not most of these students by their parents, teachers, administration, and personally, and illustrated in this word cloud. A survey respondent wrote regarding their vision for arts education moving forward:

I see the future of art education as a staple and essential part of education. Due to the pandemic, we were told to include more SEL strategies, which is inherent in art. To be

reflective and use your individual experiences became more apparent. Virtual students responded better to choice based activities and independent learning. Moving forward, I believe art education is going to swing more towards a TAB/ SEL (direction where students can use their own practice as a form of therapy. (respondent to survey question #3, May 2021). (*Note: TAB = Teaching Artistic Behaviors, and SEL = Social Emotional Learning*).

All 100 of the 115 responses that could be anonymously and confidentiality reported are printed in two separate articles in two separate issues of *Splatter Magazine* (Joseph, 2021c, 2021d). One hundred personal vision statements regarding the future of arts education provided qualitative evidence of the challenges and resilience of these arts educators across all grade levels, in their own words, and as priceless first-person voluntary data. Arts for “art’s” sake (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts); integrating the arts together, and art education in the other core content areas, as well as social emotional learning were referenced often in the vision. Figure 3 illustrates these visions via word size, as the larger the words are in the picture reflects the number of times respondents wrote the word.

Social emotional learning (SEL) is clearly seen in Figure 3. The CASEL social emotional learning framework includes five key interconnected areas, which are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, with all being taught from childhood to adulthood and across diverse cultural contexts (CASEL, 2020; OSPI, 2021b).

These are also skills that are inherent in teaching and learning in and through the arts and evidenced via the artistic processes of creating, performing, presenting, producing, responding (reflecting), and connecting (NCCAS, 2014). Further, these five areas, are evidenced by the

relationships that students form with their arts educators in each arts discipline (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts). Students self-select those arts courses of their interests and talents as they advance through the grade levels and into personal and professional experiences in the arts. They further utilize the arts as ways to communicate effectively via dancing, singing, playing instruments, creating via visual arts media, utilizing media arts platforms, making music, and playing. Positive relationships with educators is essential to most learning. This occurs over time and multiple years of positive educational and personal interactions with the same arts teacher and in the same arts discipline, grade school through college and graduate school (Dewey, 1934, 1938; Erikson 1950/1963).

Social emotional learning (SEL) in the arts may be referred to as art therapy. Art therapy occurs naturally and intentionally by what and how the arts subjects and arts educators teach life and learning through experience and learning by doing (Dewey, 1916, 1934). The expectation is that all learners will have opportunity to experience dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts and learning by doing every year of their school career; many experiencing these five arts subject areas in the elementary school and as exploratory courses in the middle and high school years and self-selecting one or more arts disciplines to experience on a daily and yearly basis (WSL, 2004/2006/2011, 2014).

Question four: What role is technology playing in your teaching/learning at this time?

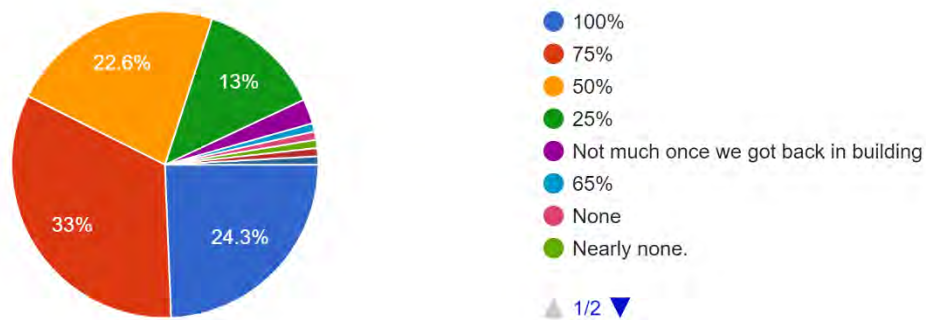
The responses on this pie chart (Fig. 4) indicate that approximately 25% of the $N=115$ respondents used technology 100% of the time $n=38$. Over half of all respondents $n=66$ were using some form of newer technology 75% of the time. An $n=92$ of $N=115$ respondents were using technology at least 50% of the time in May of 2021 as an integral tool to enhance their

teaching and learning strategies with their students. This was a huge change in one year from May 2020-May 2021.

Figure 4.

Pie chart describing the role technology is playing in teaching/learning

What role is technology playing in your teaching/learning at this time?
115 responses



Note: N=115.

Yet, the inequities in technology equipment, accessibility, connectivity, and specifically local school and district mandates and restrictions, produced a myriad of new equity, access, and inclusion issues, grade school through graduate school (Gillis & Krull, 2020).

A survey respondent wrote regarding technology issues:

Technology is used as a teaching tool but is limited as a learning tool due to budget and facility constraints. I would love to utilize VR (virtual reality) in my practice, but still have to fight to get students Wi-Fi access as the school restricts access to staff and requires students to use data plans which creates an equitable issue. (respondent to survey question #4, May 2021).

Most respondents were teaching in their same position prior to the pandemic and were still assigned to those positions either in person, hybrid, or remotely. Hope is visualized and expected in the authentic responses of $N=115$ respondents. Teachers want to teach the arts.

Following are seven survey respondent narratives about their current teaching position in spring 2021, and their current teaching position in fall 2021.

Response One. This school year was completely virtual until April. While virtual, I created an asynchronous video lesson that was assigned on Mondays, with an accompanying activity (worksheet, video assignment, etc.). Now that we have transitioned to hybrid, I do the same asynchronous lesson because I do not teach students in my classroom in person. I am not allowed to push in to homerooms, either. In the remaining weeks of school, I will have one 30-minute Zoom session with each class, to see them "live". Most of my responsibilities now that we are back at school are supervision based--hallway monitoring, arrival and dismissal duties, recess duty. I am hopeful that next year I will see my students in-person, regularly. I will likely push in to classrooms if that is allowed. We have been given no guidance about what school will look like next year, as of this point. (respondent to survey question #5, May 2021).

Response Two. I am not able to do what choral directors are most used to doing...teach ensemble singing and performance. I have done 'some' virtual choir recordings and am currently working with students on how they can best design and implement their own personal practice regime. It is a common misconception that music students know how to practice. They don't. They need a structured 'template' in order to develop a routine that will ultimately grow their musicianship. Next year, God

willing, we will once again be able to prepare ensemble music with students in the same room at the same time. That said, the process will be slow. The rebuilding of numbers will take more time than our individual and collective patience will allow. But it is the work that needs to be done. (respondent to survey question #5, May 2021).

Response Three. I am currently teaching middle and high school choir to students in a hybrid situation. Each class is broken up into online students and in-person students; the in-person students are further broken into AM/PM sections. I teach simultaneously to in-person and remote students in the morning, and just to in-person students in the afternoon. We are able to sing for up to 30 minutes at a time while social distancing and wearing KN95s. My largest in-person class is 12 students, and my smallest is 2 students. At this point, our school district is planning for a "normal" schedule next year - all students back in building for a 7-period day. (respondent to survey question #5, May 2021).

Response Four. I was required to teach from my classroom all year, unless I needed to take a leave of absence for a valid health risk - which I opted not to do. We have been in person with students since Jan. teaching hybrid with simultaneous Zooms 5 days a week. Now, most of our kids are back 5 days a week, 3 feet apart and one class I still have simultaneous Zoom for remote learners. Next year, as in years past, we have more students wanting to take art than we have room for so - we are finally adding another class with another teacher who will teach one class. I will have 10 sections of 30 kids over the course of the school year. (respondent to survey question #5, May 2021).

Response Five. I teach general art for 7/8 grade students. This year, I have taught remote/virtual, all virtual, hybrid of virtual and face to face, and now we are having to do remote and face to face. I haven't gotten to teach all my usual lessons. I have to stick to materials that a student may have at home in order to complete a project in the event that they are sent back to remote because of contact tracing. Next year, I know that there will be at least a remote option for students and possibly a virtual class one period a day. (respondent to survey question #5, May 2021).

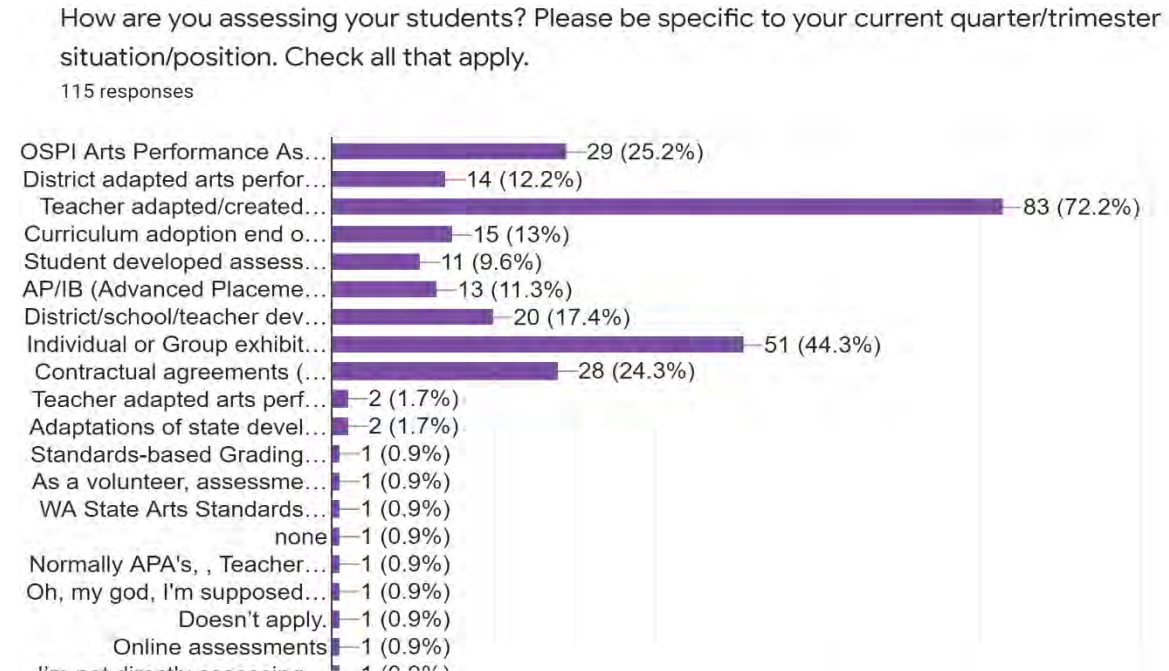
Response Six. I teach choir, guitar & piano and have classes that are 100% virtual as well as hybrid classes that involve concurrent instruction. There are students in the hybrid classes that are full virtual, so I never get to see them in person and it is difficult to connect with them in the same meaningful way as the students that are in person. Classes are offered twice a week: Students come in person once a week and attend class virtually the other day, except the full virtual students who attend both days remote. (respondent to survey question #5, May 2021).

Response Seven. What - 5 classes of entirely mixed abilities and entirely mixed grades. The way I make it work, is abandon prior skill tracks by grade level, and assert everyone to progress rhythmically - literally drumming. Sadly, a significant portion 1/3 of our students will quit music for next year. My teaching position next year is expected to return to normal, 2 classes of 6th grade entry band, 2 periods of 7th grade intermediate band and 1 period of 8th grade advanced band with 0-hour jazz band. (respondent to survey question #5, May 2021).

Question six: How are you assessing your students? Please be specific to current quarter/trimester situation/position. Check all that apply.

Figure 6.

Bar graph illustrating how respondents are assessing their students in arts education



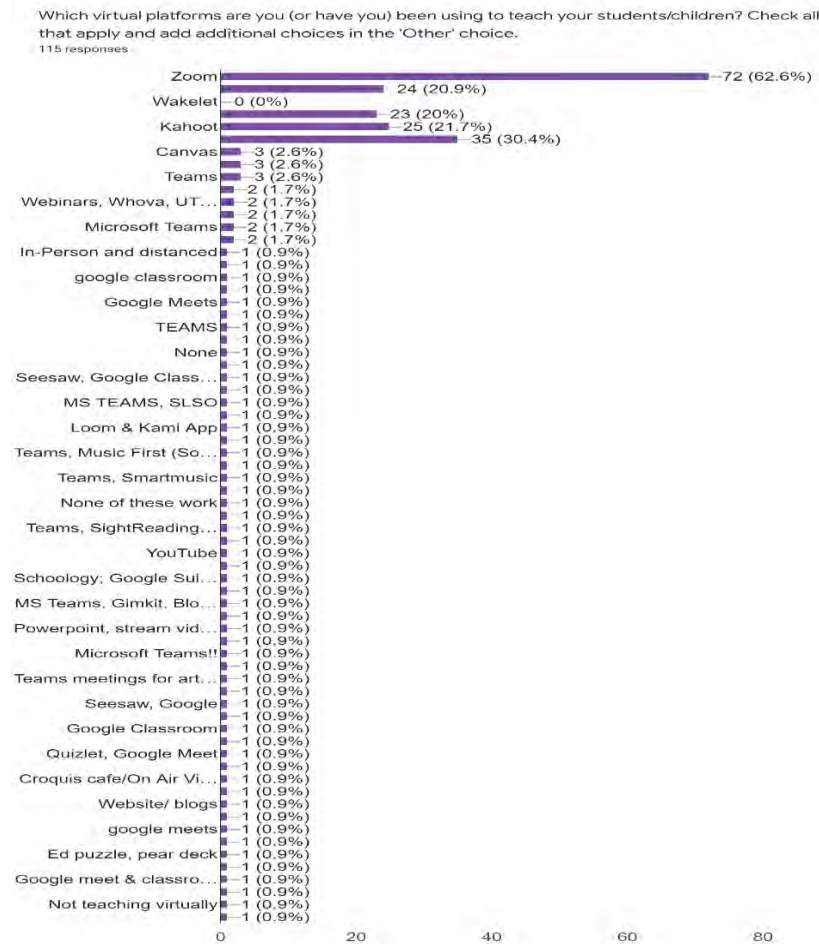
Note: N=115.

Question six validated what is known anecdotally; whereas the majority of teachers create and adapt their own type of assessments for their students at 72.2% with an $n=83$ of $N=115$. And, approximately 25% with an $n=29$ of $N=115$ arts educators utilize the Washington State Arts Formative Performance Assessments (APAs) created from 2003-2008 as summative performance assessments that became formative performance assessments (OSPI, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2021a; WSL, 2004/2006/2011). The main categories that were selected regarding student assessment in the arts are clearly visible in the bar graph of Figure 6.

Question seven: Which virtual platforms are you (or have you) been using to teach your students/children? Check all that apply and add additional choices in the 'Other' choice.

Figure 7.

Bar graph illustrating which virtual platforms are being utilized by respondents



Note: N=115.

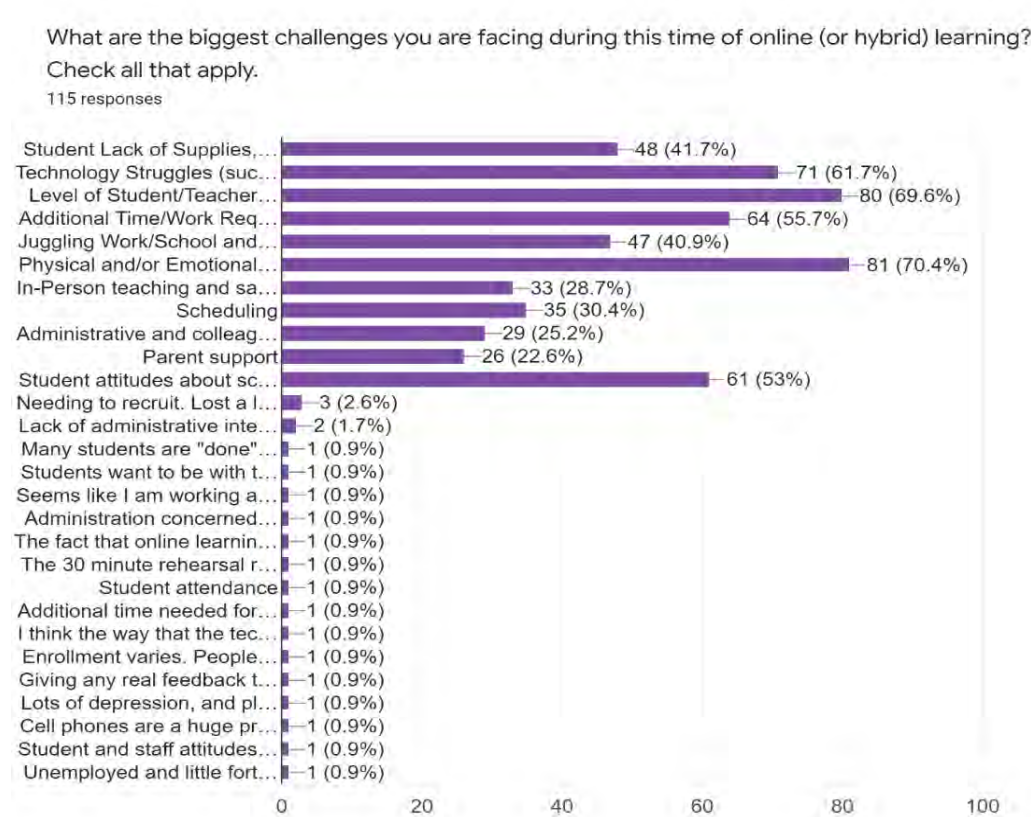
Question seven was one that allowed respondents to check all that apply and to list virtual platforms they were utilizing to teach. This list is an exhaustive list and contains programs and platforms that became a part of teaching and learning in the last year—many still being unknown to most. This bar graph further illustrates the most utilized virtual platforms during the past year by survey respondents N=115. Zoom remains the main platform of those responding on this

survey, followed by *Flipgrid*, *Kahoot*, *Padlet*, and *Nearpod*. The pandemic brought these platforms to the forefront for teaching and learning and for connecting with students, teachers, parents, and colleagues.

Question eight: What are the biggest challenges you are facing during this time of online (or hybrid) learning? Check all that apply.

Figure 8.

Bar graph describing the biggest challenges respondents faced during the pandemic with online and hybrid learning



Note: N=115.

This bar graph further illustrates and clarifies the biggest challenges. Respondents could check all that apply on this question as well as write in their own responses to the question.

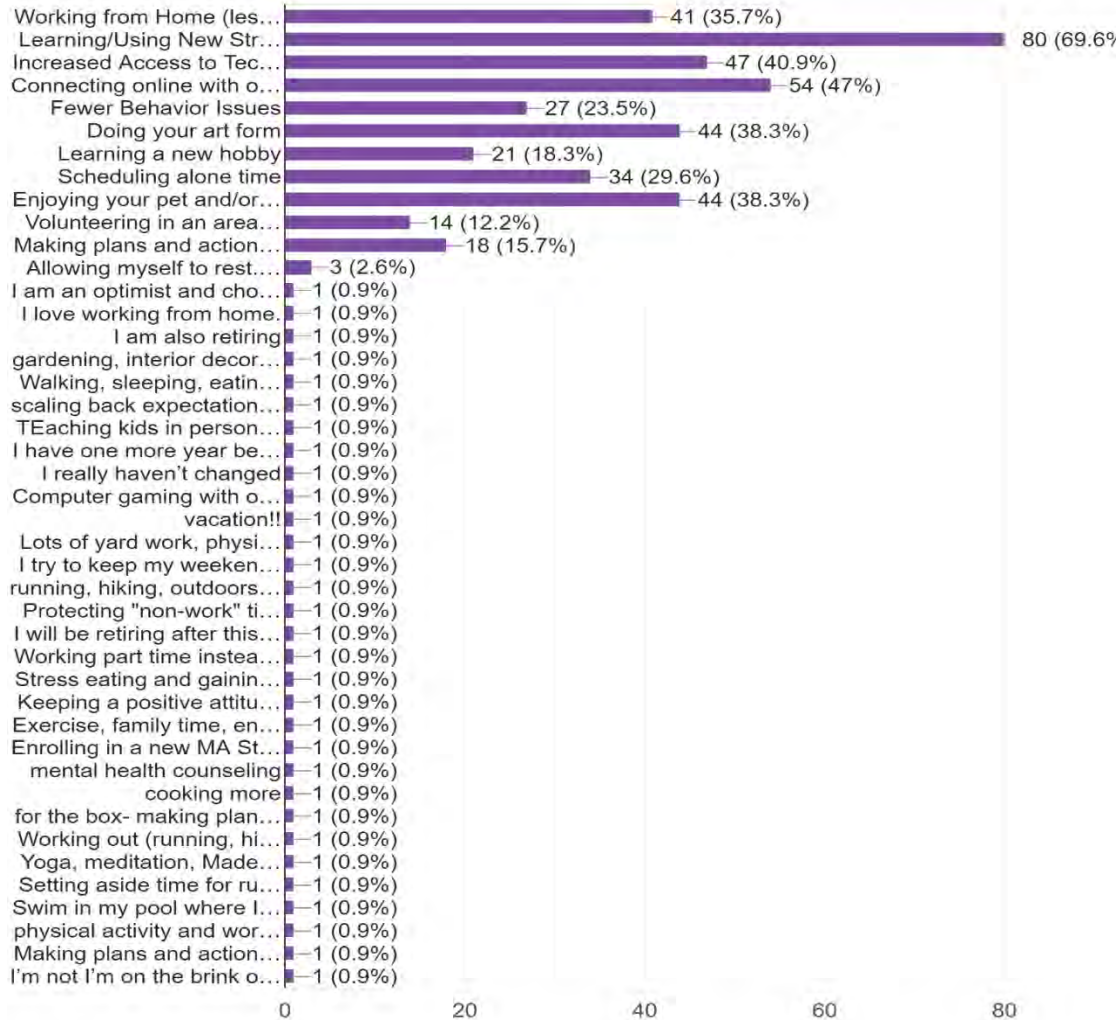
Noteworthy is the correlation between the *Level of Student/Teacher Engagement, Participation and Communication* at $n=80$ and how the aspect of teaching online has resulted in the *Physical and/or Emotional Exhaustion/Fatigue* of all respondents at $n=81$. These issues were reported as trauma, depression, and despair by respondents. *Technology Struggles* such as learning new programs/platforms, increased requirements involving technology, connectivity/access issues, follows the level of student teacher engagement and physical and emotional exhaustion and fatigue, due to the additional time and work required for everything resulting in an $n=71$. These challenges have resulted in *Additional Time/Work Requirements* with an $n=64$, correlating closely with *Negative Student Attitudes about School and Learning* with an $n=61$.

A survey respondent wrote, “The pandemic has caused traumas for all of us, that is yet to be fully realized. Our students are authentically honest when describing what remote learning has been and continues to be for them – personally” (respondent to survey question #8, May 2021).

Question nine: What are you doing to create and/or maintain your personal mental and physical health, as well as work and personal life balance during this past year of educational change due to the pandemic?

Figure 9.

What are you doing to create and/or maintain your personal mental and physical health, as well as work and personal life balance during this past year of educational change due to the pandemic?
115 responses



Note: N=115.

Question nine was another question developed from the two previous surveys, allowing respondents to select all that applied that had been referenced in the two preceding surveys, as well as to add more. Respondents revealed that some of the challenges shared in the first two surveys were now considered positives and opportunities—such as the opportunity to gain experience new strategies, increased access to technology, connecting with other arts educators from around the state and nation and world to share ideas, doing their art, enjoying their pets, learning new hobbies, and working remotely and from home were all considered areas that assisted in maintaining balance in the midst of crisis and uncertainty (Joseph, 2020d, 2021d). The top eleven responses of the $N=115$, in order, follow with the full narrative of each selection. An interesting correlation was revealed with respondents ranking enjoying or acquiring a pet with as much joy as doing their particular art form. Respondents were able to select and construct responses for this question.

1. Learning/Using New Strategies, Programs, Resources $n=80$ and 69.6%
2. Connecting online with other arts educators from around the state and country through virtual workshops, meetings, social media $n=54$ and 47%
3. Increased Access to Technology (district provided devices to students, teachers, parents) $n=47$ and 40.9%
4. Doing your art form $n=44$ and 38.3%
5. Enjoying your pet and/or acquired a pet $n=44$ and 38.3%
6. Working from Home (less travel, more time with family, comfort, etc.) $n=41$ and 35.7%
7. Scheduling alone time $n=34$ and 29.6%

them to vent with honesty and authenticity, as you can see from this word cloud. Those words that are larger were written many times in the responses indicating that the arts are alive and well, in spite of the circumstances, frustration, and ever evolving mandates and mitigating requirements. Crisis and opportunity abound in this word cloud and in the narrative responses. Four of the respondent responses follow and provide sampling of evidence of the personal impact the pandemic has produced on educators and arts education.

Response One. It has been the most difficult time of our lives (both professionally and personally). I have found that exercising/modeling compassion, patience, and being respectful of others has been good for many people. I have never spoken so much about mental health in my life, and find that although our lives are turned upside-down, there are some flowers growing in the ashes. It is the greatest period of change we've ever experienced in our lives, so we need to be kind to ourselves and continue to grow and move forward.

Response Two. I was hopeful this pandemic would encourage us to fix the problems of our current educational system (too early of a start time for teens, class sizes are too large, too much focus on testing and not enough focus on building relationships with students, etc.) There were SO many ways we could have reimaged things to resolve these problems that have “always been there.” But our district seems to just be going back to “the way things have always been done” prior to school shutting down. It’s very disappointing...

Response Three. Every single thing I've done in the last year I've not been trained for and had to figure out on my own. There is very little that we did pre-COVID that works during the pandemic. The expectations for excellence and performance are still

high, so having to do things like figure out how to put on a virtual concert and do all the video and audio editing has been killing me. It's like being thrown into a raging sea with a bunch of lumber and expected to build your boat to survive.

Response Four. I have relied less on curriculum and more on my intuition to meet students where they are in their hearts and minds as we navigate this unprecedented time historically, emotionally, and educationally. We've had so many expectations heaped on us with some amazing support mixed in with blame for not being there for our students/families. Sometimes people forget we educators are in the same boat as everyone else in terms of risk factors during this time.

Summary

In summary, the responses suggest a perception that arts education is in jeopardy, at stake, and ancillary in many schools and districts, if offered at all. The responses further reveal that there is hope and opportunity in the midst of the crisis with arts education as a key strategy for teaching and learning with most, if not all students. Arts education and the unlimited possibilities underlying creativity that is foundational in the artistic processes of creating, performing, presenting, producing, responding, reflecting, and connecting (NCCAS, 2014) has embraced the new ways of teaching and learning virtually, and in hybrid formats – synchronously and asynchronously. Arts educators have helped to lead the way, in many instances, embracing learning opportunities for needed and necessary changes in education involving individual relationship with students and capitalizing on their interests in the arts subject areas of dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts.

Conclusion

The 115 respondents of the qualitative survey agreed upon the necessity for arts education for all learners as basic education, and part of a well-rounded education for the whole child. Arts education was reported as a favorite subject for what the arts teach and for how they can involve and benefit most students in ways that are healthy for life and living—cognitively, emotionally, physically, mentally, psychologically, and academically.

Arts education was reported as essential learning to be offered in four strands that encompass and enhance students across the entire educational spectrum—arts for “art’s” sake, integrating the five arts disciplines, interdisciplinary arts or arts integration in the other core content areas, and arts as social and emotional learning strategies; whereas students utilize the arts disciplines to communicate their health and wellness.

Arts education is in jeopardy. This qualitative research suggests a perception that arts education is needed for all learners as well as the challenges facing arts education and arts educators—in their own words. The future of arts education is and remains ripe with possibility given its emphasis on creativity and the artistic processes experienced and inherent in arts education that remain essential, basic, and necessary skills for life and living in this ever-changing world landscape.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. What type of learning situation best describes your teaching/learning situation?
2. What level of students do you work with? Or, if a student, what level are you? If you teach more than one level, which level to you most identify with?
3. What do you see (your vision) as the future of arts education? How do we move forward?
4. What role is technology playing in your teaching/learning at this time?
5. Please describe what and how you are teaching in your current teaching position? Please describe what your teaching position is expected to be next year?
6. How are you assessing your students? Please be specific to your current quarter/trimester situation/position. Check all that apply.
7. Which virtual platforms are you (or have you) been using to teach your students/children? Check all that apply and add additional choices in the 'Other' choice.
8. What are the biggest challenges you are facing during this time of online (or hybrid) learning? Check all that apply.
9. What are you doing to create and/or maintain your personal mental and physical health, as well as work and personal life balance during this past year of educational change due to the pandemic?
10. Optional Question: Is there anything else you would like to share about your teaching, arts education, and/or education in general at this time?

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