



Signature Pedagogies for Art Therapy Education

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This paper session will introduce participants to the conceptual framework of signature pedagogies and present the results of a Delphi research study that examined the unique teaching methods and educational philosophy used in training art therapists. Studying signature pedagogies helps educators to identify and examine the discipline-specific teaching methods they use to guide students on the educational journey to their professional home. Because pedagogy and practice are closely linked, understanding signature ways of teaching also helps a discipline make explicit the thinking, practices, values, and ethics that underlie the philosophy of the profession itself. A differentiating focus on pedagogy may help to identify common ground, create cohesion in theory and practice, and reveal educational goals and aims for the profession as well as its deepest beliefs and practices.

Three key dimensions of signature pedagogies will be defined and presented. Repeating methods that educators use beyond general principles of good teaching to teach students (a) how to think like art therapists, (b) how to practice like art therapists, and (c) and how to act within the ethics and values that guide them in being a professional art therapist.

This Delphi study of N=18 art therapy educators from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Asia yielded consensus on three teaching methods that panelists endorsed as unique or essential to the education of art therapists: (a) experiential teaching and learning using art materials, (b) practicum/internship placements, and (c) art-based experiential learning. Qualitative data and consensus findings provided evidence that art therapy educators draw from a common language in describing the methods they use to teach students how to think, practise, and develop the ethics and values to be art therapists.

Biography

Heather Leigh, Program Director, Graduate Art Therapy. Dr. Leigh is a Board-Certified Art Therapist, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, and the Program Director for the Graduate Art Therapy Program at Mount Mary University in Milwaukee, WI, USA. She received her Professional Doctorate in Art Therapy from Mount Mary University and her M.A.



in Counseling Psychology: Art Therapy from Adler University in Chicago, IL, USA. Dr. Leigh has been teaching art therapy for the past 12 years. Her research interests are art therapy-specific teaching methods and pedagogy, art therapist professional identity, and the history of art therapy.

Recent Publications

Leigh, H. & Nemeth, J. (2024). **Meaningful objects: Memory stories for older adults.** In M. Davenport & L. Hoepfner Poling (Eds.), *Art Education and Creative Aging: Older Adults as Learners, Makers, and Teachers of Art*. Routledge.

Leigh, H. (2021). **Signature pedagogies for art therapy education: A Delphi study.** *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 38(1), 5-12. doi: 10.1080/07421656.2020.1728180.

Leigh, H. (2018). **Identifying signature pedagogies for art therapy education: A Delphi study** (doctoral dissertation). Mount Mary University, Milwaukee, WI.