

Finding and Following Your Bliss

Pam Stephens

When teacher candidates complete their field experience, the reality of moving from the status of student to educator is usually a bit overwhelming. With the years of coursework and untold hours of observing in classrooms, planning lessons, and practicing skills, it's still not unusual for newly minted teachers to ask, "How do I know I have made the right career choice?" For this reason, students in my teacher preparation program are given several opportunities to examine the reasons they are seeking to become art specialists. One opportunity is based upon the ideas of Joseph Campbell.

Campbell (1904–1987) was an American professor whose studies encompassed comparative religion, a field that led Campbell to become a lifelong explorer of the human spirit. Campbell pointed out that modern-day artists set an example for others as they create "living myths." These myths, Campbell suggested, are the physical results of individuals who look deeply inside themselves to discover and pursue their passions. Products of visual and performing artists are the physical consequences of deep thinking about personal potential and fulfillment. Campbell referred to this process as "seeking one's bliss."

A Brief Exercise in Seeking Bliss

1. Examine the dictionary definition of the term bliss. The word means matchless happiness, complete joy, and absolute contentment. Does being a teacher of art satisfy your need to find complete joy in your professional life?
2. Make a list of no fewer than five characteristics that describe what fulfills your personal bliss.
3. Create an origami box or pyramid from paper or tag board. Multiple patterns can be found online or in books (see *Bridging the Curriculum*




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- Through Art*, pages 69 and 70 for simple templates).
4. On each side of the selected template draw or write about the characteristics of your personal bliss.
 5. On the floor or inside the lid of the object you have designed, write the words "Follow your bliss."
 6. Fold the object so that "Follow your bliss" is inside and can only be seen when purposefully opened.
 7. Place your bliss box where you can see it each day. Contemplate what "bliss" is needed to fill the box.

Further Contemplation

As you thought about what each side of the origami box should show, did ideas about art teaching first enter your mind? What other ideas did you

contemplate? If you could fill the inside of the origami box with that which makes you joyful, what would be in the box? If your origami box is covered and filled with ideas about art teaching, you are on the right track. 

Does being a teacher of art satisfy your need to find complete joy in your professional life?

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References

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