

Commitment to Professional Growth & Development

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Throughout your teaching career, you will be expected to attend to your own growth as a professional educator. As a student teacher, you have already taken care of one aspect of professional growth. You have completed a course of study that has led you to this benchmark. Beyond university course work, there is a broad spectrum of opportunities that await and can contribute to your continuous and ongoing professional growth. Magazines, journals, books, workshops, seminars, online discus-

sions, and state or national conferences are some of the ways that you can fulfill obligations of continued professional growth and development.

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Magazines, Journals, and Books

In my office are bookshelves lined with written materials. Some are new; some are old. Each has been

read cover to cover. Some have been read more than once as is evidenced by their dog-eared pages and the color-coded sticky notes that organize the various topics. This is one way of keeping track of the ever-evolving field of art and art education—of showing a commitment to professional growth.

Magazines provide practical information such as new ways to utilize materials and concepts. Journals lean towards the theoretical or report on research. Both have their place in your commitment to professional growth. Without theoretical underpinnings, practical application becomes meaningless. Without practical application, theory becomes pointless. You should balance your reading between the two.

Books are widely varied—from “how-to” manuals to complex theory-based volumes. You should maintain equilibrium in your reading so that your knowledge of art and art education stays current.

Workshops and Seminars

Most schools or districts provide in-person professional development for specific content areas, but if this option is not available, consider online professional development. Show your commitment to professional growth by ferreting out programs that will contribute to your continued improvement as an art educator. Many art museums and universities provide online courses, workshops, real-time discussions, listservs, podcasts, and other resources for professional development. Other options include telecasts and videos. Whatever your choice—in-person, online, or by





Marilyn Stewart speaking at NAEA in New Orleans.

video—workshops, seminars, and discussions support your commitment to professional growth.

State and National Conferences

Deciding to become a member of art education associations is probably one of the most important professional decisions you will make.

Most states have art education associations. These associations meet at least once per year and sometimes more often. Attending state art education conferences helps members network and learn new ideas from one another. These conferences further assist teachers with learning about issues such as state laws or revised standards that directly or indirectly impact their teaching.


The National Art Education Association (NAEA) covers many bases in regard to professional growth. The NAEA publishes

journals, advisories, a newsletter, books, and brochures that are provided to members. Each year the NAEA meets for a conference that attracts thousands of members. With workshops, lectures, and other events that extend over five days, the NAEA conference provides substantial and significant professional development opportunities.

Choosing the Best Professional Development Opportunities

You have already discovered that teaching is a time-consuming activity. As you become more and more responsible for a classroom, you will need to seek those professional development opportunities that use your time in the wisest of ways. Keep in mind that the primary goals of professional development are to improve teaching quality and to affect positive learning outcomes in students. A secondary goal should

be to demonstrate your personal professional commitment to teaching, art, and art education. To judge the quality of professional development, ask the following fundamental questions:

1. How will it deepen my understanding of art content or pedagogy?
2. How will it help me to better understand how students learn?
3. Is it aligned with standards for the visual arts or with the state teacher standards?
4. Is it thought provoking?
5. How practical is it?
6. Is it worth the effort? 

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