Response to impacting the arts

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Response To Impacting the Arts

As we interact with public school teachers through our practicum students, student teachers and graduate students the trends in public education are made visible to those of us teaching in higher education. Reflecting on my conversations with teachers during student observations and with my graduate students in classes at JMU during the summer I noticed an increase in the number of art teachers being required to give up art class time or prep time to participate in RTI. I first learned of the special education program labeled Response to Intervention (RTI) last year while reading about current trends in education reform. RTI’s purpose is for teachers to work in groups to identify struggling students and provide increasing levels of interventions in an attempt to improve academic performance before lengthy testing is initiated. For more information see the National Center on Response to Intervention at http://www.rti4success.org. Like all education reforms that come and go educators make adjustments for the best. For the art teachers we value and support in higher education, losing class time to assist with RTI is affecting art education in our state. Many art teachers do not have a method of recourse to petition against losing instructional time for art without facing sanctions. My question for the higher education membership this year is: what can we do to support and advocate for the teachers in our area? If you are not familiar with RTI read more in journals or online and ask the teachers you work with how they are being impacted with this ever expanding school reform initiative.

I look forward to meeting more of the higher education members at the conference in Roanoke in November. At the division meeting we will discuss possibilities for the data of the completed surveys from all grade levels. I have begun summarizing the results from select topics and sharing it with the VAEA board members, but ideas for further use of the data are appreciated. The VAEA board has been working hard on advocacy in the past year, please bring ideas for how higher education can be more involved in advocating for the arts or share the creative methods you use for advocating for art in your community.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate Bill Wightman on his achievement of being appointed the Director of the School of Art, Design and Art History at JMU. Please contact me at any time with announcements from your institution that you would like to have listed in the next newsletter.