

**Title of Session:** Alt/Correctional Ed Forum

**Moderator:** Susan Roseman

**Guest Speaker:** Rachel Williams

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Room: After School Online Room

**SusanR** joined the room.

**RachelW:** Hi Susan

**ClaytonK:** Hello Susan

**SusanR:** Hi Rachel.

**SusanR:** Just checked my email..Bj asked me to facilitate

**ClaytonK:** <chuckles>

**SusanR:** She couldn't be here tonight!

**SusanR:** Did I miss anything?

**ClaytonK:** I got zapped with email today too... but I think Bus duty is a bit worse than this...lol

**RachelW:** Great, So Susan, I have never done this before, tell me what to do. Also Give BJ my regards, she seems like a super person.

**RachelW:** Yep, Bus and Lunch duty, no fun

**SusanR:** Let's start with intros..so we can gear the discussion to the needs of our audience.

**ClaytonK:** I teach middle school art in southern TX, outside of San Antonio

**AnneMH:** I am an experienced ABE teacher, most recently in a local jail, working on an MsED in English Ed and working in mental health. Whew.

**RachelW:** My Name is Rachel Williams and I am an assistant professor of Art Education at the University of Iowa. My research is about art and women in prison, I also work with alternative students and just recently finished a study about art and juvenile correctional facilities.

**SusanR:** I am an K to 8 Occasional Teacher from Ottawa, Ontario....so I teach all subjects.

**RachelW:** Dear Anne, forgive me I am not too hip --What does ABE stand for?

**AnneMH:** not to worry. adult basic education, i.e., literacy & GED prep.

**ClaytonK:** I feel your pain Anne, I'm currently working on my Masters in Tech Ed, comes with an MTT to boot.

**SusanR:** Rachel is a special guest here to discuss an 8 week pilot program at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women.

**RachelW:** The pilot program was geared for women who were survivors of Domestic Abuse. We worked with the General Population as well as a group of women in a Therapeutic community (substance abuse). One group had art, talk, and music, the other group had journaling, and talk.

**ClaytonK:** Art therapy Rachel?

**RachelW:** The women seemed to benefit, but unfortunately I am not sure that we were able to help all of them. One was recently released and she became pregnant by a man

whom she thought was worthwhile, I just heard that she is now in a shelter with her baby. Makes Dr. Taylor and I very sad.

**AnneMH:** When you work in the system long enough things like that don't surprise you, though they may sadden you.

**AnneMH:** Perhaps you planted the seeds (no pun intended) for future growth for that woman.

**RachelW:** No, I would not call it art therapy. I am not an art therapist. Dr. Taylor is a public health educator and she works specifically with DV. She had done therapy- Music mostly, but I was more interested in getting the women to tell their stories through images and to explore how popular culture reinforced particular stereotypes about women, power, and violence

**RachelW:** I hope so, She was really a nice woman, in for drugs. At least she seems to have kicked that habit.

**AnneMH:** The addicts often seem to be the nicest.

**ClaytonK:** I'm interested in trying to prevent some of my students from becoming your patients. I have a very large Low socio-economic group. A lot of my parents are absent because of doing time. The kids just find that end a normal product of living.

**RachelW:** Over 75% of the women in prison have at least one child

**RachelW:** It is really hard to break the family incarceration cycle. So many of the women I work with have had a parent, sibling, cousin, etc in prison so it does not seem so strange to them.

**AnneMH:** The most troubling issue for me is that women are often victims as well as perpetrators.

**RachelW:** Well, that is somewhat true. Many of the women I worked with had been involved in violence against another person.

**ClaytonK:** I see that a lot, whenever I propose a non-violent solution, I usually get the "are you for real" look. It helps if one of my long time students is around at that point... to tell them I am serious and to listen.

**RachelW:** DV is also part of a huge family cycle, it becomes a normal reaction that is very harmful

**AnneMH:** Typically there is a history of sexual abuse or d/v against the female offender, based on my admittedly limited research.

**RachelW:** Most women in prison have been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, women more so than men, especially when it comes to sexual abuse

**ClaytonK:** Have you seen the turn to violence as an avoidance of feeling? Some of my kids do it regularly

**RachelW:** I am not sure about that, there may be some connection, I just think that part of it is a lack of long-term thinking skills(biological) and a lack of alternative solutions.

**SusanR:** I notice young girls are becoming more aggressive and violent in the schoolyard.

**ClaytonK:** Amen ...

**AnneMH:** Also, I think one must consider the adolescent brain, and the theory that development stops once drug abuse begins.

**AnneMH:** (which is endemic in our society)

**ClaytonK:** and if they start at a young age [like so many of my students seem to be doing] the brain must get locked into that hyper-emotional

point of development that makes middle schoolers look so insane

**RachelW:** There is research that indicates that violence and drug abuse are adaptive strategies

**SusanR:** . o O ( seems to start as early as 11 or 12 years of age )

**AnneMH:** or less even

**AnneMH:** Explain please, Rachel?

**RachelW:** Sommers and Baskin (1992) believe that people who are in poverty stricken areas move to crime -drugs and violence as a way to cope with social and economic deprivation.

**AnneMH:** Makes sense to me. So how do we as educators intervene effectively?

**RachelW:** Well- good question. One thing is to take into consideration not only a child's behavior at school, but also the ordeals or obstacles they might face at home. Show them another "version" of life. Many juveniles do not have an alternative view of the world that does not include prison or drugs.

**AnneMH:** How do the arts work in?

**ClaytonK:** Working up the Higher Order Thinking Skills scale? Get them to envision something else?

**RachelW:** Well for one thing there is research that shows that the arts help children learn to start and finish tasks, also if they are successful

in art they might be more inclined to pursue another academic class (38%)

**RachelW:** The arts also help students create a picture of their life on which they can reflect and perhaps see some connections that were not obvious before. Of course it depends on how you teach them.

**JeffC** joined the room.

**AnneMH:** And in our wonderful society school districts are cutting "fluff" like art & music. Sometimes the English lit class is the only place they get arts at all.

**RachelW:** What is important is to focus on projects or "problems" that are student centered and student directed. Who ever is asking the questions is learning- so find out what questions students are interested in and help them to figure out how to answer them

**RachelW:** Art is being cut everywhere. We just lost half of our elem. Art teachers in Cedar Rapids

**AnneMH:** It's a tragedy.

**SusanR:** We have lost our music and art consultants as well as music and art teachers

**RachelW:** I think part of it is the current political climate and the emphasis placed on subjects which are easier to assess in terms of concrete numbers and tests

**ClaytonK:** The organization for Art teachers here in TX is working to make the Arts a Required part of every curriculum and must be taught by a certified teacher

**SusanR:** However, we have artists in residence; visiting musicians and artists

**AnneMH:** yes, but there are also district budgets to be dealt with

**RachelW:** This is true. And arts councils are in dire straights these days

**AnneMH:** Susan, you are in Canada.

**AnneMH:** Yay art teachers in TX!

**SusanR:** yes, the Capital..Ottawa..so we make use of the art gallery and art centre resources

**RachelW:** Here here for TX art teachers. Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand are much more progressive in terms of arts education in correctional facility and in social settings outside of school (sorry but it's true)

**AnneMH:** Don't be sorry, be yourself.

**ClaytonK:** We keep pounding the boards with the research that early art education improves testing scores...making the standardized testing work for us

**RachelW:** I wish our government would look beyond its borders.

**AnneMH:** if only. we're so insular.

**ClaytonK:** unfortunately I doubt it will happen any time soon

**RachelW:** Texas is very big on Standardized tests. There is a good deal of research that shows that most of those tests are very biased, that is unfortunate

**AnneMH:** Rachel, any more you can share about the pilot program?

**RachelW:** Sure ask me questions. I wrote an article for Art Education with Dr. Taylor

**AnneMH:** unfortunately I haven't read it....would love to...and to be able to access other publications by you as well.

**JeffC:** And although test scores went up in Texas... I read where University of Texas professors were appalled at the lack of writing and critical thinking skills that the freshmen class had.

**RachelW:** We looked at images from popular culture and also watched Killing Us Softly. Here is a website for the UK arts and offenders unit-lots of great research and info

**RachelW:** <http://www.a4offenders.org.uk/>

**AnneMH:** great.

**AnneMH:** any more comments/stories about working with offenders?

**ClaytonK:** too true Rachel...and I hate to say it but our dear Pres. is a good 'ole boy of the first order...he would love to make Texas' TEKS a national standard

**RachelW:** <http://groups.msn.com/PrisonArtsNetwork/links.msnw>

**AnneMH:** What is Killing Us Softly?

**RachelW:** This website has tons of resources related to arts in corrections. There is also a book called Teaching the Arts Behind bars that has chapters written by all kinds of people who use the arts in prison

**RachelW:** [www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaGenderAndDiversity/KillingUsSoftly3](http://www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaGenderAndDiversity/KillingUsSoftly3) - 38k - Cached - More pages from this site

**RachelW:** [www.jeankilbourne.com/](http://www.jeankilbourne.com/)

**JeffC:** Sequel to the Roberta Flack song?

**SusanR:** Do they perform outside the prison environment at all

**RachelW:** Jean Kilbourne is the author she is a professor who has been writing about media images and women in the popular culture

**AnneMH:** Is it a play?

**RachelW:** The Media Education foundation has lots of info about this

**RachelW:** Flack-ha ha good one!:)

**AnneMH:** I think Carole King wrote it.

**AnneMH:** just to be pedantic LOL.

**RachelW:** Also for kids another one that is really good is Tough Guise about male violence and television and Dream Worlds-about Music Videos-good teaching resources

**RachelW:** If you just type in these titles on Yahoo you will find them.

**AnneMH:** great

**RachelW:** This goes back to what I was saying about teaching people to look at what is important to them, deconstruct it, find out where the hidden messages are and reconfigure their vision of the world-sounds a bit grand, but it is really worthwhile

**RachelW:** It does not have to be about pop culture either-that is a good place to start with younger people.

**AnneMH:** Doable with juveniles as well as adults?

**RachelW:** Oh yes, I think that kids would really benefit from asking them selves what the culture is feeding them. All of those videos would be fine for high schools students.

**ClaytonK:** Any for middle schoolers?

**RachelW:** You could use snippets. Kilbourne's older version is ok- it was made when things were a bit tamer

**SusanR:** Shouldn't we start with a formal character education program in the early years?

**SusanR:** or a values program

**AnneMH:** I've only seen that in Montessori schools in the u.s.

**AnneMH:** (or parochial)

**RachelW:** I think that is a really good suggestion, but the problem is what kids learn at home is often more important to them and their world view than what they learn at school. Sure they can learn to "play the game" at school, say the right things, etc, but what really matters is working in the community and the school. Bringing in people from their neighborhoods, people they know and have them talk about character

**SusanR** agrees

**AnneMH:** yes

**ClaytonK:** unfortunately easier said than done

**RachelW:** There are schools that implement character education that are public, Lois Biddix in Florida runs one- You can look her up on the internet too.

**SusanR:** Thank you, Rachel. This discussion was certainly an eye opener

**RachelW:** This is true, but if you are willing it is possible. Go to resources like the United Way, and Churches, (I am not suggesting a religious program) you can find people in every community who have strong characters and good stories who are willing to come and speak for one afternoon.

**RachelW:** Thank all of you, what good questions, I am soo excited by all of this talk. It is great

**ClaytonK:** thank you, definitely things to think about...maybe some avenues of change too

**AnneMH:** Rachel, I have talked to ex-cons who are NOT allowed to come to schools and talk!

**RachelW:** That is a real problem. Get them to tell their stories to a video camera

**AnneMH:** Thanks you all for the focused discussion, and, Rachel, for all your input.

**AnneMH:** great idea, that.

**ClaytonK:** Our school uses a program from a local prison for something similar...

**RachelW:** I have encountered a lot of ex prisoners who would gladly do that, many want to help-Good luck with your studies

**AnneMH:** Thanks!!!

**RachelW:** Thanks so much. Have a good night.

**AnneMH:** You too.

**ClaytonK:** g'night

**RachelW:** Happy trails Clayton

**SusanR:** Thanks Rachel. Great discussion. You will receive a transcript after you logout.

**SusanR** left the room (signed off).