

## **Women's Caucus (WC) <http://naeawc.net>**

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The Carrie Nordlund pre-K-12 Feminist Pedagogy Award is designed to honor a person who has made a special effort to incorporate feminist pedagogy into her or his pre-K-12 teaching, and which pre-K-12 art educators, peers, and administrators have recognized as inclusive. I invited awardees, **Carrie Nordlund** (2002), **Caryl Rae Church** (2009), and **Christine Gorbach** (2008) to share their feminist pedagogy. I also invited **Linda Hoeptner Poling**, who coordinates the NAEA Women's Caucus research initiative dedicated to feminist theory applicable in K-12 art education (<http://naeawc.net/research.html#Praxis>), to summarize central tenets of feminist pedagogy. The following is a collage of their perspectives. Christine Gorbach's practice of feminist pedagogy focuses on encouraging personal, meaningful art. Caryl Rae Church describes her revelation when she literally lost her voice, and Carrie Nordlund centers her feminist pedagogical practice in relationship to place. We hope you will attend the WC award ceremony at NAEA 2011 in Seattle in which the 2011 awardee will present on feminist pedagogy in pre-K-12 classrooms.

**Linda Hoeptner Poling:** As an educator who values feminist pedagogy as a powerful vehicle in teaching art and in designing art curriculum, central tenets come to mind, which are supported by scholarship in the field. The WC website at <http://naeawc.net/research.html> provides a list of resources. The following tenets speak to all women and men, all girls and boys, with a call for equity, faith in possibilities for an equitable society, and a meaningful construction of self in relation to one's gender.

- All human experiences are tempered by gender and gender inequities exist. It is possible to reduce these inequities and promote positive social change.
- The aim of feminist pedagogy is to create gender equity through empowerment of students and through creating communal classroom spaces.
- Feminist pedagogy embodies shared leadership, collaboration and cooperation. As feminist educators, we must practice multiple strategies, including questioning our own gender assumptions and engaging in reflective practice.
- Feminist pedagogy acknowledges that content knowledge of and in the arts intersects many facets, including sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, etc. Gender identities are *complex*.
- Feminist pedagogy aims for meaningful ways to engage students in critical thinking and inquiry about topics of gender issues, including inequality, privilege, and power.
- Feminist pedagogy should define and identify goals of equity in a way that is flexible and inclusive.
- Feminist teachers treat students as individuals, creating equitable (not necessarily equal) conditions for male and female students.

**Christine Gorbach:** Ted rarely talked. His Independent Education Plan (IEP) said he was autistic and violent but gave little clue as to what would set him off. During my presentation to middle school art students on the artwork of Joseph Cornell and Betye Sayre, I noticed Ted's intense interest in the project to create clay reliquaries that would

hold something personally important to each. Ted created a clay sphere in a cage of rough coils. The imprisoned mass was remarkable knowing how Ted struggled with his bulky, uncoordinated hands. It was also extraordinary that Ted wrote an artist's statement. He wrote about feeling like *a big ball trapped inside a cage with no sign of an exit. People on the outside could only look at the ball of clay with no hope of making connections.* In discussing his artwork, Ted said he could neither give nor receive hugs. Students have important things to say and need opportunities to do so.

**Caryl Rae Church:** Weeks into my first year of teaching, I *lost my voice*. My boisterous classes were challenging even with a voice. The day had begun with second graders creating with paper mache. A student offered to be my loud speaker, parroting everything said. In kindergarten, children with deep wells of compassion put on their listening ears as I strained my vocal cords to whisper instructions to them. I had made it through a difficult morning, but sixth grade on Friday in the afternoon was my last challenge. Those chatty, social folks were looming over me. Anxious of losing control of the class, I furiously made hand lettered signs that dictated procedures. Despite myself, the class was really productive and behaved beyond my limited expectations. Going into the day I felt powerless and fearful without a voice. My ill-conceived ideas of good teaching were based upon dominance and hierarchy. By losing my voice, a door opened to surrender. The most powerful and truly feminist teaching I could do was to work alongside my students. It was a pivotal moment in my pedagogy.

**Carrie Nordlund:**

Place is where we are. Place is where we want to be. Place is what we want to create.

–Theodore Holappa, Ojibwa Keweenaw Bay Tribe, 1993

These words have been a mission statement for my feminist pedagogy. I recognize that all my students, and for that matter all peoples, search for a sense of place. Where there is *place*, we are accepted and honored for who we are and what we can become. Where there is *place*, we look at the past to inform a better future. Where there is *place*, we commit ourselves to creating a haven for justice to reside.