

Artistic Pedagogical Technologies

A Primer for Educators

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Series in Education



VERNON PRESS

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www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street,
Suite 1200, Wilmington,
Delaware 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Series in Education

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018964327

ISBN: 978-1-62273-533-4

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Table of Contents

Foreword by Sharon L. Moore	v
Introduction	ix
Chapter 1 Artistic Pedagogical Technologies: Beginnings and Evolutions	1
Chapter 2 Theoretical Foundations: The Quantum Perspective of Learning	9
Chapter 3 The Value of Creativity: Technology, Edutainment, and Play in the Classroom	31
Chapter 4 Artistic Pedagogical Technologies: 35 Examples	49
Chapter 5 The Evidence Base: Past, Present and Future	75
Chapter 6 Trying Something New: Motivating Educators to Give APTs a Try	115
Chapter 7 Selected Lesson Plans	129
Index	145

Foreword

by Sharon L. Moore

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire”
(Yeats, n.d.)

As teachers in post-secondary educational environments, we all hope to inspire the students we teach, to know that somehow we can make a difference in their lives and light a fire and a passion for learning that will continue across their lifespans. Several years ago, I was inspired by the words of Parker Palmer, internationally renowned educator and author, in his book *The Courage to Teach* when he said “when my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illumined by the lightning-life of the mind—then teaching is the finest work I know” (Palmer, 2007, p. 1).

Maybe you have experienced moments like these as an educator. I know that I have and it is at those times when I might think that I have “made it” in my calling. Of course, there are many other moments, but these Parker Palmer moments are the ones that inspire us as educators. They propel us to keep trying to improve our practice of teaching when we see students excited about their learning, and when we see students transformed by their learning.

In *Artistic Pedagogical Technologies*, also known as APTs, authors Janzen, Perry and Edwards offer college and university educators a toolkit of strategies to engage learners in exciting and collaborative learning environments. Born out of their experiences as nurse educators in both traditional face to face, and online teaching and learning environments, they summon us into their classrooms to take a glimpse at innovative activities they have created. These activities invite students into welcoming learning environments and engage them in communities of learning where even students who are studying on their own, such as on an online environment, feel welcomed and part of that community. While the authors describe APTs used in nursing education, this is simply because these are their own teaching environments. The potential applicability of APTs extends to far broader educational contexts and a variety of disciplines.

Through their descriptions of creative arts-based activities, and a discussion of student responses to those activities, we readily see the potential for transformative learning that APTs can have when carried out in classrooms with intention and purpose. We are also reminded of the important role that teachers play in facilitating environments in which this transformation occurs. APTs have the ability to engage both teachers and learners and to help teachers become more real, particularly in online educational environments. Through thoughtful and judicious use, APTs can facilitate the felt social presence of the teacher. Parker Palmer said:

TEACHING MATTERS and that good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. The methods used vary widely.... The connections made by the teachers are not held in their method, but in their hearts— meaning *heart* in the strictest sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self. (2007, p. 11)

This quote is very apropos to what the authors suggest about how APTs can be viewed as "soul work" where "APT's call to the soul and manifest that which is deep within each of us" (Janzen, Perry, Edwards, 2019, p. 2).

Over the past decade, there has been a growing recognition of the important role that arts-based initiatives can play in education, health care and research. In 2018, *The Journal of Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry* published a special issue on Creating a Canvas: Artistic Pedagogies in Academia. In addition to the research of the authors of *Artistic Pedagogical Technologies*, other arts-based initiatives have focused on research (Leavy, 2015), health (McNiff, 2004), elementary education (Steckel, Harlow Shinas, & Van Vaerenewyck, 2015) and future technology (Kurach, 2016) to mention only a few.

Clearly, *Artistic Pedagogical Technologies* is leading the way as a primer for educators who are willing to use APTs in the classroom. More than just a list of "how to" strategies, however, Janzen, Perry and Edwards, contextualize these strategies within an educational theoretical framework that grounds APTs within the quantum theory of learning. From "humble beginnings" as Dr. Perry describes, the use of APTs has been researched for the past 15 years in both graduate and undergraduate nursing programs. Students' comments have reinforced the value of these strategies which are clearly outlined in this textbook. In this book, APTs are offered freely for educators to use or adapt for use in their classrooms.

Perhaps the most effective way to summarize the potential for the use of APTs is in the words of one of my own students when we had finished a semester in a graduate course in Advanced Qualitative Research. During the semester, I had incorporated the use of photography (photovoice) and metaphor while teaching about the landscape of qualitative research. I had likened learning about the landscape of qualitative research to various aspects of climbing a mountain and we discussed how essential it is to examine the landscape from various viewpoints. My student, Ruth, shared her experience of that semester as follows:

“This has been a transformative semester like nothing I could ever have imagined”.

This quote by Pema Chodron captures it nicely:

“The next time there’s no ground to stand on, don’t consider it an obstacle. Consider it a remarkable stroke of luck. We have no ground to stand on, and at the same time it could soften us and inspire us. We can either cling to security, or we can let ourselves feel exposed, as if we had just been born, as if we had just popped out into the brightness of life and were completely naked... Right there in that inadequate, restless feeling is our wisdom mind”.

Ruth went on to say:

I am learning to read, listen, and look deeply, while letting go of the security of preconceived structures and premature conclusions. I am learning to continually question everything and to trust the emergent processes of understanding. I am learning that I know very little, and can trust myself far more than I dreamed possible. Finally, I am learning that it is a marvelous thing to have good company on the journey – learning from those who have already climbed a little further and reaching out a hand to those scrambling over the rise just below, sharing our trail mix as we marvel at the view and discuss maps and strategies that help us along the way.

As I re-read Ruth’s words, I remember that this was truly one of those inspiring moments that I mentioned at the beginning of my comments.

I encourage you to read and engage with the APTs presented in this book. They have been developed, tried and tested by the authors Janzen, Perry and Edwards, who are also exemplary teachers and researchers. Try them out. Adapt them for use in your own classrooms. As a teacher who

has taught in distance and online environments for almost forty years, I speak from experience when I say that APTs can transform your teaching and help you to feel more real and engaged with the students in the classroom.

Parker Palmer in his latest book referred to his friend's description of her 16 month old daughter learning to paint. This friend's opening line of an essay was "she's on the brink of everything." Palmer went on to say 'that's exactly where I am today at age seventy-nine. I'm frequently awestruck as I stand on the brink of the rest of my life' (Palmer, 2019, p. 13). When you venture to try something new, like incorporating APTs into your classroom, it can feel like you are 'on the brink of' something new, exciting and transformational in your teaching. It can be a little scary, but the rewards are oh so awesome!

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Introduction

Today's educators are resilient. In the face of technological developments that are moving at an almost unbelievable pace, educators are called upon to be tech-savvy to keep up with their students (Alexander, Becker, Cummins & Giesinger, 2017). As each year passes being tech-savvy could be seen as quickly becoming a must (Sterrett & Richardson, 2017). With this, there are many decisions to be made—and not all of them are easy. In particular, “today's [educators] must make tough decisions on how to spend their classroom time. Clear alignment of educational objectives with local, state, and national standards is a necessity. Like the pieces of a huge puzzle, everything must fit properly.” (Foreman, 2005, p. 4). However, within the puzzle pieces there remain elements of choice. One of the puzzle pieces can be conceptualized as the delivery of course materials. Within that puzzle piece there exists a myriad of choices. There exists much literature about techniques and interventions to try in the classroom (Abrami, Bernard, Borokhovski, Waddington, Wade, & Persson, 2015; Hultquist & Bradshaw, 2016; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015). Creativity, especially the use of the creative arts, can infuse a classroom with wonder.

Such is the use of Artistic Pedagogical Technologies or APTs for short. As a collection of creative arts-based strategies, APTs have been researched for 13 years. They have been thoughtfully chosen and tested with much success in the student population. This book is the culmination of that research. From humble beginnings of a single APT to now a collection of 35, APTs show great results in connecting with students.

The use of APTs could be described as soul work (Ashby, 2011; Dirx, 2001). APTs call to the soul and manifest that which is deep within each of us. APTs, in turn, stir the soul to action and the results can be breathtaking. Although Brown (2018) was talking about poetry, APTs can have a similar effect where APTs “translate emotions to a concrete language that demonstrates the complex and subtle realities of the human soul” (p.1).

While the focus of the examples in the book is on nurse educators because that is our background and experience, we anticipate that APTs can be used effectively (and without much, if any, adaptation) in teaching students from many disciplines. If you teach other health care

professionals like pharmacists, rehabilitation therapists, dieticians, or social workers, this book will provide you with valuable instructional strategies. Perhaps you teach teachers, why not give APTs a try in your classes? In turn, the learners you teach may be motivated to use APTs in their classes furthering the effects of these engaging approaches. Even students in fields that seem more number and fact focused (and perhaps less human-focused) such as science or mathematics may find value in engaging in APTs in order to enhance their creativity and help develop a sense of community in their classrooms. Further, APTs can be used in face-to-face, online, and blended classrooms with equal positive benefits. In our view, APTs have potential value for all learners.

The conception of this book came about because of a request from Dr. Carolina Sanchez from Vernon Press that perhaps we share some of our research. Writing this book has been a yearlong venture that has been exciting for us. We hope you enjoy it. Most of all we hope that you try APTs in your classroom and see, as we have seen, wonderful connections with your students, and minds that are expanded due to the use of the creative arts. Like Resnick (2004), “our ultimate goal is a world full of playfully creative [students], who are constantly inventing new opportunities for themselves and their communities” (p. 4).

This community includes educational spaces where educators have the continuous ability to explore, play, and grow. Come along with us and begin a journey as you read this book. This journey is highlighted by creativity and creative processes. We know the best is yet to come. Shall we begin?

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PAGES MISSING
FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Index

A

APTs (artistic pedagogical technologies), ix, 1, 3, 23, 31, 118
effectiveness of, 9
art of nursing, 100
assumptions, 15

B

Begin with Baroque, 68
big T technology, 34
Bloom's revised taxonomy, 31
building blocks of learning, 18

C

choices., ix
Class Temperature Checks, 68
classroom environment, 99
closure, 81
Cognitive Dissonance Theory, 116
Collective Quilting, 51, 90
community, 4
Community of Inquiry Model, 21
Conceptual quilting, 50
connected, 27
connectivism, 5
constructivism, 5
Courtroom Scenes, 66
creative play, 35
creativity, ix, 40, 41, 86, 102, 115
cues and conduits, 22
culture of community, 103

D

David Bohm, 14
digital native, 32, 77
Disengagement, 76

E

early adopters, 123
educational objectives, ix
educational technologies, 75
edutainment, 32, 35
E-Journaling, 73
Elevator Speeches, 70
Endowed Progress Effect, 116
engagement, 122
Enhancement of Student Needs, 101
entanglement, 12, 13
Entropy, 23
Ethics-opoly, 67
Expectancy-value Theory, 117
external locus of control, 79

F

feedback, 25
five assumptions, 9
flow, 77
free play, 41
frontal brain, 36

G

grants, 75
Gratitude Letters, 69

H

Haiku-It!, 59, 99

hard technology, 43
humanity, 3

I

innovative, 25
Intelligence, 18
Interest Theory, 117
invitational theory, 124

L

learning activities, 1
learning environment, 90
Letter Writing, 71
little t technology, 34
living environments, 20

M

Maslow, 78
Media Collage, 72
Meeting of Student Needs, 78
Minute at the Movies, 59
Miss Frizzle, 42
Mission Impossible, 54
Morning Coffee Forum, 67
motivation, 115
music, 104
My Music Moments, 65

N

Narrative fiction, 72
Narrative weblog, 73

O

Obituaries/Music, 67
online theatre, 63
Our Community Soap Scenes,
60

P

Parallel Poetry, 57
PD sculptures, 65
Photo Cascades, 64
Photostories, 69

Photovoice, 49
play, 35, 37, 87
Poetic Learning, 55
poetry, 3
principles, 15

Q

qualities of nurse educators, 118
quanta, 16
quantum, 11, 16
quantum communication, 14
quantum dimensions, 16
quantum mechanics, 11, 12
Quantum Perspective of
Learning (QL), 4, 5, 9, 20, 21,
99, 104, 118
quantum physics, 11
Quote Share, 70

R

real, 88, 103
real and authentic medium, 4
realms of knowledge, 17
reflective journaling, 100
research, 9
risk-taking, 39

S

safety, 79
salon, 10
self-actualization, 83
self-transcendence, 84
SITE Model, 20, 21, 34
soft technology, 43
stoke the fire, 119
story writing, 61
story-telling, 61
student engagement, 76
superposition, 12, 13

T

technology, 19, 21, 32
tech-savvy, ix
The Great Debate, 53
The SITE Model, 4

Theme songs, 60
theoretical foundation, 11
theory-practice gap, 43
trust, 26

U

universalistic, 19

V

Virtual Reflective Centers, 53
Virtual Talking Stick
Roundtables, 63

W

waves and particles, 12
weblogs, 104
wellbeing and confidence, 81
Word Sculptures, 62