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Pelo's "The language of art: Inquiry-Based studio practices in early childhood settings" (Book Review)

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Book Reviews



Pelo, A. (2017). *The language of art: Inquiry-Based studio practices in early childhood settings* (2nd ed.). St. Paul, MN: Red Leaf Press. 234 pp. \$39.95. ISBN 9781605544571

In evaluating this treasure, it is just as important to define what it is *not* as what it is. *The Language of Art* is not an early education textbook; it is not a step-by-step craft instruction book; it is not a rigid set of lesson plans. Rather, *The Language of Art* presents the tools and techniques that allow a teacher to engage children in art as a way of hypothesizing, researching, and discovering realities in the world around them. Pelo draws on her own experience coaching children inside and outside the studio to illustrate how teachers can practically apply inquiry-based studio practices to real-world classrooms. She challenges her readers to deeply respect children's abilities to grasp and interpret the world, offering mentoring and advice that is centered on children's investigations rather than quick right answers. Pelo's challenge to teachers is this: "Can we reorient ourselves from talking to listening, from instruction to invitation?"

The Language of Art certainly invites both avid reading and practical application. Divided by medium, each chapter in Part 1 explains how to set up the studio, conduct time with the art work, organize cleanup, document and display the art, and continue the investigation begun in the studio. Materials are nicely listed in a sidebar, filling a portion of the gloriously generous margins. Part 2 details concrete examples of what it looks like to employ art as a tool for children to express and refine their ideas about the world. *The Language of Art* encourages curiosity, investigation, and careful attention on the parts of children and teachers alike.

Reviewer

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