

Evoking Empathy Through Art and Humane Education

by

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the project created and the research completed to study the positive effects of combining art education and humane education to inspire empathy in elementary aged students. In Chapter 1 I review my guiding question, “Can art and humane education be combined to evoke empathy in students?”. Chapter 2 reviews the literature I used as part of my research. This critical contextualization focuses on literature and that defines empathy and its related terms such as sympathy, pity, and compassion as well as how empathy can be inspired by art. I review artists who have inspired my own art practice and the work I do with students as an elementary art educator. I also review children’s books used to spark empathy in students as one of the resources that helped build my project. Chapter 3 is an overview of my own studio practice and the connections it has to animal welfare. Chapter 4 talks about the project I created for a group of grade 4 students called the Empathy Pawject. It reviews the research, lessons, and findings of the project, and references the website developed for the Empathy Pawject.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my friends and family whose support of my passions fuel my work. Luke Carruthers who offered his talents and countless hours of his time to teach me how to share my work. My husband Robert, who does not only encourage my dreams and goals but jumps into them feet first.

Thank you to all of the people who volunteer their time at the animal rescue centers and sanctuaries. Your empathy and love for the animals in your care is evident in all of the work that you do. You make a positive impact in the world every day.

To my Empathy Pawject students whose talents and big hearts make this project the success that it is.

And lastly, to Willow and all of the animals at the shelters – those who have found homes and those still waiting. You are the heart and soul of this project.

Introduction

1.1 The Question

As a part of the University of Victoria Art Education Master's Program, I developed a question that would link humane, character and art education: can humane and art education be combined to evoke empathy in students? I embarked on a project that would answer the question, create awareness for homeless shelter dogs, hone the children's technical art skills, encourage them think critically and passionately about their work, create a platform for students to publicly show their work and bring attention to art programs in schools.

I want to try to make a change in how society views animals, revered breeds and some types of animals over others and sees individual animals as 'things' and not as 'sentient beings.' I have been inspired by Photographer Rachael Rogers of Canmore, Alberta. Rogers volunteers her time to help adoptable shelter dogs get exposure. Using her talents in photography Rogers has been raising awareness about the problem of overbreeding and the related issue of overpopulated animal rescue shelters full of dogs needing homes. Rogers' art involves taking shelter dogs for mountain adventures and documenting and sharing their stories on Instagram. Her work has drawn worldwide interest. When one views Rogers work, we see the dogs as joyful companions and as individuals. You can see the bond between her and the dogs from varying ages, personalities and backgrounds. This is an artistically moving way to encourage support for the shelters and adoption or fostering of the animals. I felt that her approach could contribute to character education, which is a mandate at the school that I teach. I have always been passionate about the arts and art education and its ability to teach kids in all

subject areas in ways that sometimes, traditional lectures cannot do. I needed to find a way to combine my love for art education, humane education, and character education and develop a project that would affect my students in a positive way. It's so very important to nurture kindness in children. Based on my experience in the classroom, I strongly believe that nurturing kindness in children while encouraging critical thinking is a powerful formula for growing a kinder society and as an educator, it is my duty to do so. Based on my experience and observations in the classroom, I believe that children are innately kind but that they are susceptible to a variety of pressures from peers, television marketing, entertainment and commercial games that create acts of unkindness such as bullying or violence. It is my hope that approaching character education through art and linking it to humane education provides a base to ensure they stay strong and true to their kind selves. I developed a guiding question that would become my professional goal for the school year, "In what ways and to what extent would intentionally providing experiences that might evoke empathy in students, impact the art they produce and their perspective on the world?" I feel that now more than ever people need to understand and use their abilities to be empathic. Armed with a passion, and a desire to evoke empathy through art education, I created the Empathy Pawject.

1.2 Humane Education and My Childhood

The hope to evoke empathy in students using humane education as the subject and art education as the vehicle is directly related to my own artistic work where I paint images of animals who I feel need a voice to promote ethical treatment and evoke empathy for them. My desire to promote humane treatment and care for animals stems from childhood. My family and I spent our summers in a small fishing village called

Grand Barachois, New Brunswick. When swimming, I would stay clear of the Artic Red Jellyfish with their long vicious stingers. They would sometimes take over the water and you would learn to dance while you swam to avoid them at all costs. The Moon Jellyfish whose tentacles were so small they couldn't harm a human were fair game however; I would pick them up with my bare hands and from time to time carry them from the water onto the sand where my family would be parked for the day. Fortunately for me, I had parents who taught me why that behavior is wrong. The Artic Red Jellyfish had a defense mechanism strong enough to make me scared of it and leave it alone, but the Moon Jellyfish had no defense mechanism and therefore I felt, as a child, that it was ok to disturb it and use it for my own entertainment. But both creatures, despite their differences and abilities to defend themselves, deserved my respect. My parents have always amazed me with their ability to teach me a lesson without making me feel ashamed. A conversational "you know they don't feel well out of water, what do you say we put them back?" held life lessons I did not recognize at the time. This is a skill that comes with extreme patience and one I have always tried to remember while teaching the students under my care. As educators we have the power to teach children in such a way that they receive information that encourages them to act appropriately without them feeling shame for past thoughts or actions.

1.3. Empathy in my Studio Practice

My artwork for the past three years is similar to the work that I am doing with the Empathy Pawject art lessons with my grade 4 art classes. Like my students, I have painted portraits of rescue animals, or animals who may be seen as pests, or disposable, or animals with little defense mechanism, to try and evoke empathy in my artwork's

audience. Similar to how I learned not to play with Jellyfish and remove them from their natural habitat, the seawater, I want my portraits to speak to others without making people feel any amount of shame in their lifestyle or previous views on different animals. Instead, my goal is to gently show them a precious side to all animals and hope to evoke empathy for that animal through my art.

1.4. Articles, Children's Books and Books

The books mentioned here are used for research, tools in the classroom and placed in the website as resources for other teachers. Please see www.empathypawject.com for more information. In researching empathy as a concept, the article *You can't teach empathy, but these picture books inspire it* by R.J. Palacio, was the first I read which paved the road to the question, can empathy be taught or evoked? The author's claim, that "You can only inspire it. Like its sister words, kindness and compassion, empathy is wakened in the soul" (Palacio, 2017, para 1) caused a spark in me that has ignited the passion to build my project and has fueled all the work going into it. My intuition agreed with Palacio, that empathy cannot be taught, like a skill, it is an attitude that can be inspired, and that art and art education can be used as a tool to evoke empathy and kindness. But my research and experience lead me to the conclusion that empathy can be both taught and evoked.

In the literature review section of this paper, I will go over the research around the question: Can the combination of humane education and art education evoke empathy? Janette Larson in her article *Be Kind to Animals: Encouraging Compassion through Humane Education* (2002) provides a long list of resources in the form of picture books, novels, and various classroom activities that, through humane education, encourages

children to treat all species with kindness. One such resource is a children's book called "*Let's get a pup! 'Said Kate,'*" written and illustrated by Bob Graham (2001). This book is eventually used as the starting point in the second lesson in the Empathy Pawject, where I introduced the children to the dog they would 'adopt' (learn about) for the project. Graham's book not only talks about adopting from an animal shelter, but it introduces the students to the idea that senior dogs need homes and provide as much love as puppies.

In thinking about how Humane Education could be taught with art to evoke empathy, I looked at *Improving Upper Elementary Students' Humane Attitudes and Prosocial Behaviors through an In-class Humane Education Program*, an article written by William Ellery Samuels. In this article, Samuels (2016) talks about nurturing compassion and kindness through teaching humane education programs. Samuels research shows that students that receive more humane education lessons are more empathetic towards non-human animals.

I will be talking about how we are all hardwired to be empathetic beings using information from Roman Krznaric's *Empathy: Why it matters, and how to Get It*, (2014) and taking a look at compassion and empathy in the classroom using Susanne Garvis and Georgina Barton's book *Compassion and Empathy in Educational Contexts* (2019). I will reflect on Frans De Waal's findings while studying empathy in apes in his book *Age of Empathy* (2009). The ways in which Frans De Waal's works with apes underscores an animal's emotional needs.

1.5. News Articles

These four news articles found online will be used to help strengthen my case that humane and art education, when taught together, have a positive impact on a child's ability to be empathetic: *First Center for Empathy and Art Launched in Minneapolis* (Daley, 2017) from Smithsonian Magazine on smithsonianmag.com; *Illustrators helping to building empathy* (Zoe, 2017) from playingbythebook.net; New York Times article called *You can't teach empathy but these picture books inspire it* (Palacio, 2017) from www.nytimes.com; and American Library Association's article *Be Kind to Animals: Encouraging Compassion through Humane Education* (Larson, 2002) from ala.com.

1.6. Introduction to the Empathy Pawject

The Empathy Pawject is a service-learning art project combining character education and humane education. The project included the creation of a humane-based art lesson plans; partnering with an animal shelter; development of an online social media platform providing a space to celebrate the children's work, promoting art education and increasing awareness for shelter dogs; obtaining a community-based public art show for the students and fundraising using students work to raise money for the animal shelters. To research the question: 'Will this project increase their ability to empathize?' a notice was sent home asking parents to complete a survey to indicate, in their opinion, their child's current understanding, or lack of understanding of empathy. Students were also asked to complete a survey at school, given to them by a neutral third party, to indicate their level of understanding of empathy before the project started. As part of an extended project that included all the grade 4 students at Southeast Elementary 'adopting' a dog

found in one of the shelters in Calgary's surrounding areas, The Empathy Pawject gr. 4 student artists received a profile of one adoptable dog complete with a story, medical and temperament information, a brief age appropriate history and photos. They learned about their dog and presented this information to their class. Our school counselor and I team-taught three empathy-based lessons before the students embarked on their drawing and painting lessons. Through videos, literature and group discussions, the students learned what empathy is, the difference between sympathy, compassion, and pity and how we can understand it and evoke it in others.

After completing the preliminary sketches of their adopted dogs, each student was given a canvas to start their portrait drawing classes. Students learned how to draw a generic dog head and used that base to add special details that reflected their dog's unique features. Once the dog portraits were drawn with details mapped out, the students learned how to use different painting techniques, brushstrokes, and colour theory to develop a painted portrait of their dog.

Their work has been posted on the public social media platform Instagram as a way of raising awareness for adoptable dogs. All of the children's artwork can be found on @empathy.pawject.

The children's artwork, learning and great efforts to raise awareness and evoke empathy in others was celebrated through a public art show. The Empathy Pawject dog portraits were scheduled to have a show at the New Central Library in downtown Calgary from March 9th – April 9th, 2020. Due to the unfortunate events surrounding the Covid 19 Pandemic, this particular art show and the fundraising was cancelled.

I formally researched the process to determine if empathy could be evoked through the combination of art and humane education. Prior to implementing the lesson plans, I used the University of Victoria's Guidelines for Ethics in Dual-Role Research for Teachers and Other Practitioners (2008). Any educator wishing to evaluate the effects that their programs has on students must be mindful of the fact that they are in a "power over" relationship. This means that they have a captive audience with the students they teach who may not realize the difference between voluntary participation in the research aspect of their learning and everyday curriculum-based learning. For this reason, it is vital that educators familiarize themselves with the ethical guidelines provided by their schools or school districts and with the university the educator might be attending.

Teaching resources can be found at www.empathypawject.com. I have created this website to help other educators implement this project in their own classrooms and art studios. It addresses:

- understanding empathy and how to introduce empathy to children;
- the art lessons used in the Empathy Pawject;
- resources available for educators;
- questions to help evaluate students understanding of empathy;
- the importance of displaying children's work in a public art show; and
- how to build community through this project

Critical Contextualization

Can empathy be taught through Art Education? In my own artistic practice, I paint animals that I have met or learned stories about. By doing this, I not only paint the shapes and colours that make up their portraits, but through the connections I make to them, I paint animals whose personalities I hope shine through in their portraits. In a short video called *Pain and Sympathy* (2010), William Kentridge discusses how drawing the image of a person will help you gain sympathy for them. He does this experiment by drawing people who are dying in hospital. He feels that if you spend time drawing an object there is a “certainty towards that image embodied in the human labour of making that drawing” (Kentridge, 2010). He continues to say how the hours spent drawing an image becomes a compassionate act. Though Kentridge is speaking about sympathy, I made a similar connection as I empathized with my subject matters, whether their stories were sad or uplifting. It brought me to question whether I could evoke or teach empathy within the children I taught using a similar method of creating art.

2.1. My Art and Inspirations

Drawing on the dedication to animal welfare by artists like Rachael Rodgers, and Sophie Gamand, the playfulness of works by Georgia O’Keefe and Chuck Close, and the shock value and politically driven work by Banksy and Jeff Koon’s as artistic inspiration, the dedication to art education of the late Dr. Harold Pease and researchers who have investigated art and/or empathy, my personal art has been influenced as well as my desire to create the empathy art project.

I was lucky to be a student of Harold Pease’s at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Nova Scotia from 1999-2001. At the art college, Harold taught psychology

and sociology courses. At the time, I didn't realize what an influence those courses, or his art and writings, would have on my career path and passions today. My decision to have an art show to display the children's dog portraits at the end of the Empathy Pawject is directly influence by Dr. Harold Pearse. I fear the erosion or the elimination of art programs in schools. In his Article *The Natural Way to Promote Art Education: You Can't Paint a Mural When Your Back is Against the Wall* (Pearse & Heald, 1984), co-written with Robin Heald, Pearse and Heald created a series of fictional correspondence which pose the question, "Why do we have to educate the public to the value of art while a similar kind of public consciousness raising is not necessary for, say math or reading educators?"(Heald, p. 45). In these fictional letters, Heald questions whether or not art educators should go on the defense and turn to whatever groups may have the power to influence or make changes to possible cutbacks in the art education programs. He questions whom to go to "defend art programs." Pearse responds by saying that maybe what they need isn't the best defense, but a good offense and the best offensive approach is to celebrate student's art by displaying it publicly (Pearse & Heald, 1984, p. 44).

After reading the article I reached out to Harold to ask him about his work and his thoughts on being both an artist and an art teacher. He said:

To be a leader in art education, one must be, or be perceived to be, proficient in, and passionate about, their field. The field of course is the intersection of art and education and the art teacher (or any teacher when teaching art) must embody the personae of both the artist and the teacher. (Full disclosure: I borrowed this notion of the artist persona and the teacher persona from Mike Emme when we were both teaching preservice elementary education generalists at the U of A). Being a leader is about establishing preconditions for things to happen, just like creativity can't happen unless certain preconditions are present and nurtured. Besides being involved in organizations like the Alberta Fine Arts Council and the Canadian Society for Education through Art, art educators should, in my view, involve themselves in local and provincial art and art gallery organizations. Of course, it

starts at the school level, then out to the local community and then beyond. But the key (and the challenge) is for art educators to be aware and active participants in both the art and the education worlds. For better or worse, art "specialist" teachers are the ultimate generalists! (personal communication, August 1, 2018)

Harold Pearse, my professor, Dr. Michael Emme who he mentions in his email communication, as well as the book *Artist Teacher: A philosophy for creating and teaching* by G. James Daichendt (2010) inspired me to embrace my life as both an art educator and also as an artist. By working on my own body of work, I have been able to offer more to my students both in terms of the caliber of teaching by staying fresh and on top of my own artistic skills, but also in terms of showing how passion and hard work can help to build a community.

Jeff Koons' work, that is often dismissed by art critics as "smug" (Brockes, para. 1) and kitschy, struck a chord with me for those exact reasons, but in a good way. I love that his work angers people. It frustrates people so much, and produced so much conversation, that he made \$58 million dollars with his infamous work, which set a record for the highest paid piece to a living artist (Brockes, para. 1). In his body of work titled '*Banality*,' Koons uses kitschy gift shop ornaments as his muse to create larger than life sculptures. The most famous of these of course is *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* (Brockes, para. 6). But it was Koons endearing work titled 'Puppy' that stole my heart and made me think about how proportion and theme can play together to create a message, or at the very least evoke an emotion. Koons based his 12.4-meter-tall sculpture of a terrier puppy on a small wooden sculpture he created in 1991. "Koons chose the terrier because he believed it would be disarming and non-threatening regardless of the scale" (Parfenovics, n.d.). Reading the exhibition information called *Puppy: Jeff Koons* on the Contemporary Museum of Modern Art in Australia website (Parfenovics, n.d.)

made me think about scale for my own work. I have always painted on a large scale but until 2018, I had not painted on a large scale to pass along my feelings on political subject matter. My goal would then become to create a series of large scale portraits of animals that I hoped would evoke a specific emotion of empathy in my viewers for those animals.

In 2013, when I saw Banksy's mobile artwork called *The Siren of the Lambs* (Tackett, 2003). I was filled with excitement! *The Siren of the Lambs* is an art piece that sends a message by using animated toy farm animals positioned in a meat truck to highlight the cruel conditions that animals live in when being transported to a slaughterhouse from a factory farm. Here is a piece done by a famous, albeit anonymous, artist who has used a fun, whimsical way to shed light on dark subject matter. I wasn't only excited, but heart-broken by the sight of these sweet animals shoved into a dirty over-crowded truck, heading to their deaths. It was, in fact, a catalyst for painting what I paint and also eating what I eat as a vegetarian. With this in mind, I know firsthand the power that an art piece can have and the change it can inspire.

The common theme artists like Jeff Koons, and Banksy have is the ability to shock and use humor to draw attention to their work and their message. Drawing on my past experience with both rescued farm animals, and portraiture, I began a body of work called *Animal Picture Day*. I painted rescued farm animals that I met at a sanctuary east of Calgary, Alberta, called The Alice Sanctuary. I wanted to provide viewers of my paintings the same precious emotion parents feel when they receive their child's school photos by surprising them with enormous paintings of farm animals posed as if in their

own school photographs. Because I teach at a uniformed school, I wanted to paint my animals in their own school uniforms which is why they are all wearing a uniform tie.

2.2. Connection with Others: Finding an Empathetic Community

Once I mapped out how I would attempt to teach or evoke empathy through art with my students I began to wonder if this could become a larger “pay it forward” type project. Would it be possible that once the students found an empathetic response through their art, they could potentially raise awareness for a good cause and evoke empathy in their audience with their art? I started to look on Instagram to see if this would be a good platform to show the students work and raise awareness for animals in need. Social media is such a powerful tool to share your opinion, share messages and spread awareness about things you feel are unjust, and to be introduced to some of the world’s most passionate artists. I was drawn to the work of Rachael Rodgers

[\(https://rachaelrogersphotoworks.wordpress.com/\)](https://rachaelrogersphotoworks.wordpress.com/) a Canmore based photographer, who takes adoptable dogs on day long or weekend long adventures in the mountains. She documents their experience and shares their photographs and stories on social media (@trailsandbears). I could see the effectiveness of this approach in widening an audience to raise awareness and send an important message. For example, she often attaches hashtags to her posted work such as “adopt don’t shop” which directs anyone following that hashtag to her photographs of dogs in need of loving homes. By doing this, she is raising awareness for the homeless dog, the problem with breeding animals, and the need for fostering or adopting animals. Rodgers’ work, along with conversations with my advisor about empathy, art and humane education, inspired me to create a body of work with my grade 4 students which would teach them about empathy, evoke empathy in

others all the while teaching them painting skills. I reached out to Rodgers and told her my idea to have the students each learn about an adoptable dog, to paint a portrait of it and raise awareness for that dog. I asked for permission to use some of Rodgers' photographs of adoptable dogs for the project. She generously offered me access to her entire reel and only asked that I reference her page (@trailsandbears) so that her viewers would also see the work we were doing. She was excited about the idea saying:

“I love your idea! I think showing animals who are currently (or were at the time of their photos) living in animal shelters in this happy art will definitely help raise awareness that there are AMAZING dogs (and other animals) in shelters getting passed up every time a family makes the decision to buy from a breeder. My goal, too, is to raise this awareness in society and make a shift in thinking. But starting young is definitely a great way to shape the future minds who will be consuming pets in one way or another. I saw a project online on some news feed that was about elementary school kids going into a shelter and reading stories to dogs (from outside their kennels). To help socialize and mentally stimulate the adoptable pup. I think ideas like that and yours are great and too few in number. I have volunteered with around 50 dogs now and they are mostly in my highlight reel and posts - so there are lots of photos to choose from. I would just ask that the source (just @trailsandbears) be listed for each portrait so that viewers can check out the project. (personal communication, September 26, 2018)

Having access to all of Rogers's adoptable dog photos allowed me to begin what I called, the *Empathy Pawject*. www.empathypawject.com. This was the beginning of a wonderful working relationship with not only Rachael Rodgers, but with the shelters we choose as our recipients, Cochrane Humane Society for the 2018- 2019 year and the Pawsitive Match Rescue Society in the 2019-2020 year, and other shelters in Calgary and surrounding areas. The idea behind the Empathy Pawject was to use images of real life adoptable dogs living in shelters to teach my students about empathy and portraiture. They would each get their own individual dog profile complete with an image and the

dogs' story. By learning about, sharing information with their classmates and painting their dog, my hope was that they would develop empathy for them. I created an Instagram page with the handle '@empathy.pawject'. I posted progress photos of the students work as well as completed portraits. I geotagged the images with the humane society each dog is from and used a series of hashtags to help widen the audience and raise awareness for the dogs.

When I started the *Empathy Pawject* in 2018, I quickly found individuals with similar goals through social media. I had developed a community that stretched from province to province and into the United States and Australia. By learning and following new hashtags, as well as Instagram's algorithm which shows you what site may be of interest that you could explore, I discovered Sophie Gamand's work. Sophie Gamand has a website (<https://www.sophiegamand.com/>) containing her bodies of work, and an active Instagram page (@sophiegamand) she used to help spread awareness about adoptable dogs. She has also written a book called *Pit Bull Flower Power* (2018) which uses beautiful photographs to highlight the pit bulls she works with. Her photography takes the viewer on a fun, whimsical and altogether heartbreaking journey into the lives of rescue dogs. Gamand's work struck a chord with me because of its connection to my own work on the subject of adoptable dogs for the Empathy Pawject. When I reached out to Gamand, who lives in New York, she told me what a beautiful thing it has been to know her photographs and message have reached like-minded people all over the world.

It was through the beginning stages of the Empathy Pawject that I was introduced to Gamand's work. I had begun the lessons and started to post progress images and resources on the Instagram page I developed, and after seeing Gamand's Instagram page I

went to her website to see her artwork. Using her power as an artist to advocate for animals, Sophie Gamand takes photographs of abused, neglected or adoptable pit bull puppies and senior dogs in her effort to find them loving homes and equally importantly, to dispel the unfair myths that fuel the negative stigma attached to the breed. All of her works, though differing in style and message, shed light on the situations many dogs experience.

I ended up contacting Gamand to ask her some questions about what she does and her relationship to other artists with whom she may have connected over social media. I told her that I found that with my own work on the Empathy Pawject, once I was following my passion, I naturally found a community of likeminded people hoping to achieve similar goals with humane education. I asked her if she found this with her own work once she began posting it on Instagram. Did she notice a community develop and people reaching out to her? She said:

Yes absolutely. I think that is key. It's incredible how small the world/universe becomes once you specialize and find likeminded people. I have people reach out to me all the time, from all over the world. It's beautiful." (personal communication, July 12, 2019)

Before I recognized that art might nurture empathy in my students, I personally experienced empathy as an aspect of art. This was a perfect reason to post the children's work online; a community was already there waiting for us to begin to build on it. If I could be so inspired and moved by the work that other artists are doing, I knew the children I taught could be responsible for moving and inspiring others as well.

2.3. My lessons and the Literature

After the first year that I started *The Empathy Pawject* (2018-2019), I began more formal research into empathy and art. I looked at books and articles about education, empathy, art education and humane education. Katherine Ziff's article *There's Beautiful in Brokenness: Teaching Empathy Through Dialogue with Art* (2017) "describe[s] a classroom exercise used to increase students' ability to understand others and express empathy" (p. 249). Ziff's article is about a classroom of students learning to become counselors. These developing counselors were asked to respond to art in a museum setting. They were given question prompts such as "What was this experience like for you?", "What piece had the most meaning for you?" And "What did you learn about yourself?" (Ziff, 2017, p. 256). When altered slightly, these questions were easily used with my younger group of art students during their Empathy Pawject reflection piece. My *Empathy Pawject* aims to evoke empathy in a group of 81 grade 4 students who are learning about and painting adoptable dogs from a local shelter. For the sake of my project though, Ziff's article describes three types of empathy: Emotional Simulation, Emotional Regulation and Perspective Taking, (Ziff, 2017, p. 250). These categories were helpful for me to design my own lessons and projects merging art and empathy. For more information about how my lesson plans include art making and character education and humane education activities, please see the website at www.emapthypawject.com.

William Samuels, Lieve Lucia Meers, and Simonna Normando's article *Improving Upper Elementary Students' Humane Attitudes and Prosocial Behaviours through an in-class Humane Education Program* (2016) describes "Nurturing kindness, compassion and concern for nonhuman animals, people and the environment" (Samuels,

Meers and Simona, 2016, p. 597). I work for a charter school that has a locally developed K to 12-character curriculum which is taught both explicitly and opportunistically.

Compassion, and Empathy, are part of the character virtues we weave into our everyday lessons as we teach the Alberta Curriculum. My big question about inspiring empathy through art and humane education fits perfectly with our school's mission. We try to nurture kindness, teach compassion and foster empathy as we guide our elementary school children through their programs and on to the next chapter of their lives. Because this project is also my professional growth plan goal, finding evidence about the value of The Empathy Pawject is as important for me as it is for my students. Samuel's article includes a review of field-based evaluations of the students "self-reported attitude to towards animals as well as their attitudes towards the environment and other people as well" (Samuels, Meers & Simona, 2016 p. 598). He describes one test in particular called The Fireman Test which was introduced in 1979. To have a comparison, before the test, elementary school students were randomly assigned to one of three groups: either one that taught them a humane education lesson with humane education related materials, one that had only humane education related materials and one control group that had neither materials nor a lesson (Samuels, Meers & Simona, 2016, p. 598). The test asks students to choose what they would save out of a fire: animals or a group of inanimate objects. I don't believe that this is an ethically sound measurement of a child's ability to be empathetic, to ask a child to choose who isn't going to die is cruel. However, it is also pointed out that the results of the Fireman Test were significantly higher in the favor of saving the animals with students who took lessons on an ongoing basis, in comparison

with students who took a brief lesson, which does point out the effectiveness of the lessons.

Helen Demetrius' book *Empathy, Emotion and Education* (2018) looks at empathy and its connection to education. Understanding when and how a person develops and exhibits empathy is an important skill for a teacher attempting to evoke it through art, literature or other educational programs with students. In her introduction, Demetriou describes how research shows that babies have an emotional awareness of one another but, that awareness can be affected, altered and changed by the people around them. That research supports my belief (and my school is committed to the belief) that it is our job as parents, educators and guardians to inspire empathy and compassion and feed the kindness they already have developing. My job as an art educator is to foster the empathy and compassion I know they already possess, and bring it to surface in their art. She quotes Alfred Adler that, "Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another" (Demetriou, 2018, p. 2). Like Demetriou, I think that goes two ways. Children listen and respond to us, especially as teachers, but we must also model the behavior by listening and responding appropriately to the children under our guidance (Demetriou, 2018, pp. 1-2).

In *Humane Education: A Way to Motivate and Engage Students* (2018) Julie O'Connor gives examples of how educators can use humane education in all curriculum areas to help foster compassion and empathy in children. Although I was mostly interested in how Humane Education can be taught in art and ultimately used to inspire empathy in children as well as promote kindness towards animals, I found the ideas listed for integrating humane education into math, science, social studies and language arts

interesting and a wonderful way to achieve the same result. O'Connor points to one US study finding that almost all (99.3%) of children would like to have a pet. She also points out that an interested learner is a more engaged learner; by using a topic that children are already interested in, their engagement should increase and therefore they will retain the information much longer (O'Connor, 2018, p. 56). O'Connor also provides a link to a great resource called redrover.org. This website is full of resources such as picture books, discussion topics for the classroom and a wonderful children's magazine called *Kind News*. I drew information from *Kind News* to help my empathy-based art lessons. O'Connor's research provides support for the educational value behind the amazing spirit, compassion and empathy I saw with my group of grade 4 Empathy Pawject artists.

As I have been wondering if kindness, compassion and empathy can be taught or only inspired, Arbour's article, *Teaching Kindness: The Promise of Humane Education*, (2009) grabbed my attention because, much like the *Improving Upper Elementary Students' Humane Attitudes and Prosocial Behaviors through an In-class Humane Education Program* (Samuels, Meers & Simona, 2016) article, it discussed evidence of effectiveness in humane education programs. Arbour (2009) discusses the link between deliberately cruel acts towards animals and violent criminal behavior and domestic abuse in later life. My thought, that empathy (or its absence) is a pattern that emerges and is reinforced over time, suggests that if we can teach humane education and therefore teach kindness, compassion and inspire empathy, we can hope to also prevent violent behavior later in life.

In looking at the literature on teaching toward empathy, I came to realize that it is important to explain the definition of empathy and how it differs from its related terms:

sympathy, compassion and pity. *In Empathy: Why It Matters, and How to Get It* Roman Krznaric (2014) touches on the difference between sympathy and empathy by giving this example:

You see someone begging under a bridge, and rather than just pitying him (remember, that is sympathy), you may think about what it feels like to sleep out on a cold winter night or to have people walk straight past you without even bothering to look you in the eye” (Krznaric, 2014, p. xvii).

One of the challenges in teaching empathy to children is to have them not confuse it with pity but to actually put themselves in another’s position and *feel* how they feel. Krznaric further explains in his book, empathy is not just about feeling the same sadness of another, but feeling the same joy as well (Krznaric, 2014, p. xvii). The lesson plan titled “Paint a Future for Your Dog ” (see www.empathypawject.com) gave the students an opportunity to envision their adoptable dog in a happy place.

Georgina Barton defines compassion in her book, *Compassion and Empathy in Educational Contexts*, (2019) as something that serves to alleviate suffering. All four: pity, compassion, sympathy and empathy, work together but are very separate things.

Much of the literature I found shows that empathy is not only good for society in general but also good for the empathizer. Elizabeth Cohen and Cynthia Hoffner (2013) look at the empathy needed by an organ donor to donate organs after death in their article *Gifts of giving: The role of empathy and perceived benefits to others and self in young adults’ decisions to become organ donors*. The article talks about the pride and gratification that donors feel when providing a tool for science and learning or a lifesaving act (Cohen & Hoffner, 2013).The authors also suggest that it is not a completely selfless act: “...extant research suggests that self-interest incentive is still a desirable – if not needed – ingredient of many prosocial exchanges” (Cohen & Hoffner,

2013, p. 129). Opportunities for prosocial change are abundant in our everyday lives in smaller but significant ways. This warm and positive feeling is one that I myself have experienced from being the empathizer and have seen with people in my personal life. My mother cannot walk by a homeless person asking for money without stopping, not only to give what she has to offer in terms of money, but also a smile and to say hello. When I questioned her on this once she said, “no one wants to be on the street, and everyone wants to feel human.” I began to watch her when this would happen and noticed that her facial expression and body language signaled actual change with each encounter. She felt actual sadness when she saw a middle-aged lady begging for money while sitting on a cold concrete bench on the side of a Halifax downtown street. Her whole body changed to happiness when the women smiled and they exchanged a quick conversation. I realized here that empathy is not only good for the person you are showing it to, but also good for your own wellbeing.

While observing the children’s responses in the classroom, I noted how much joy they received from helping raise awareness for their dogs. They were animated around the project and would ask about their dog frequently and would cheer when I had news that any of the dogs had found homes. One child said "The Empathy Pawject was cool! I liked learning about all the different dogs, and it was so exciting when we learned if one found a home." And for a feature article CBC Calgary did on the Empathy Pawject called “*These kids learn ‘em-paw-thy by painting dogs who need homes*” by Madelaine Lapointe (2020), one of my student’s parents was quoted saying,

[my son] was deeply connected to the story of his dog, Vic,' says his mom. 'It brought out a lot of emotions in him: empathy, sadness, and hope, to name a few.

He showed such concern for the dog's future to the point of asking us if we knew anyone that lived close to Vic's shelter that perhaps would want to have him as a member of their family. (Lapointe, 2020)

This parent continued to say to me

It was a powerful experience for our young children to be able to connect art with emotion, and inversely, to use art as a way to address emotions. He felt committed to helping Vic get adopted through his art and our social media networks. Being so passionate about the project, and so committed to helping his dog find its forever home, inspired him to give it his best effort. So much so, that he said to us, 'I didn't even know I could paint that well! (Personal communication, 2020)

These examples put into words what I observed: the interest they had in their dogs, their strong desire to help their dogs and the joy and pride they felt when a dog was adopted all speaks to how the empathizer benefits from the experience too.

Seeking evidence to support my theory, that you can evoke empathy in art education, has been a pivotal part of my research both for this thesis as well as my professional growth plan. Krznaric suggested that empathetic people exhibit 6 habits that I found useful in planning the lessons in my unit: The first two habits, 1) "Switching on your Empathetic Brain" and 2) "Make the Imaginative Leap" (Krznaric, 2014), work well as introductory lessons in an empathy-based project for children by explaining empathy and how we can try to cultivate it. Krznaric's habit 3) "Seek Experiential Adventures", talks about exploring lives and cultures that differ from our own daily lives (Krznaric, 2014). My students are doing this by exploring a life very different than their own, one of

a homeless puppy or senior dog. Habit 4) “Practice the craft of conversation,” became part of my evidence building. I had students practice listening and fostering curiosity by writing a message to their dogs. They wrote questions they would like answered by the dog if their dog could answer back such as “What was life like for you before the shelter?” and “Do you have a best friend in the shelter?” “What is their name?” “What games do you like to play?” By practicing the craft of conversation, students were able to show me that they could imagine what the dog might feel like by putting themselves in that dog’s place. In habit 5) Krznaric points to literature, other art forms and community to “Travel in Your Armchair” by “transporting ourselves into other people’s minds with the help of art literature, film and online social networks” (Krznaric, 2014, p. xv) and in habit 6) he calls to “Inspire a Revolution” by “Generating empathy on a mass scale to create social change and extend out empathy skills to embrace the natural world” (Krznaric, 2014, p. xv). I link this last suggestion to my student’s participation in the social media portion of the *Empathy Pawject* where they showcased their work to a larger community to raise awareness for all shelter dogs and highlight a real-life individual dogs looking for homes at the moment.

In her essay *But It Wouldn't Be Me”: Exploring Empathy and Compassion* (2019) Melissa Cain explains that her experience leads her to believe that empathy is an outcome of creative expression in the arts (p. 47). She uses an example of an art piece completed with student teachers called *The Cloth of Dreams* where the pre-service teachers created individual quilt squares filled with symbols about their dreams on calico cloth to contribute to a larger art piece. Cain developed a studio environment that helped students reflect on their own work. Cain noticed that the students became so engaged in their work

and in the work of others that there would be “long moments of silence when a collective holding of breath or ‘inspire-ation’ took the place of words and held the room hostage” (Cain, 2014, p. 47). And that after hearing and feeling what others felt in their stories, they seemed to leave the room “strengthened and changed” (Cain, 2014, p. 47). It is no wonder, with reports like these, that art could be considered a great avenue to take to encourage empathy and compassion. In the first year of the *Empathy Pawject*, one student fell so in love with the dog they were painting they would ask daily if he got adopted. It was certainly not unusual for the kids at this point to inquire about the whereabouts of their dog, but what I found heartwarming and a great testament to the empathy and compassion I saw developing in this project, is that this student couldn’t have a dog of his own. He couldn’t gain anything from seeing this dog get adopted except the sheer joy in knowing this once homeless animal now had a family. Even more incredible was the community of cheerleaders I saw build with this student’s peers; they would ask me each week if that student’s dog had been adopted yet. The day I got the news that his dog had found a home I couldn’t wait to report back in that day’s art class. When I announced that this particular dog had found a loving home, the children at his table cheered and high fived one another. These students, of only 9 and 10 years of age, could teach many adults how to support another person’s feelings by validating and showing empathy towards them! Responses like these encouraged me to continue the program into a second year and to do more formal research on its positive effects on children’s outlook on animals as well as their art making.

Is empathy something that we are born with? Is it something that we all have inside of us that just needs nurtured and exercised? Can you teach empathy? In his book,

The Age of Empathy, Frans De Waal (2009) points out the importance of social structure in chimpanzees. He describes a group of chimpanzees under his care who lived for decades in an enclosure that had contained no wood. The day his team of primate experts began building a new “more exciting” structure for the animals, each chimp was locked up in their own separate cage and in some cases separate buildings. Once the structure was built, he and his team watched with great anticipation to see which chimpanzees would be the first to play on the new structure after the release. What they didn’t account for was the importance of socializing and community to the chimps. They were surprised to see that after the release, no chimps rushed to the structure they built, instead, the first moments of release “were all about social connections. Some chimps literally jumped into each other’s arms, embracing and kissing” (De Waal, 2009, pp. 14–15). Now, I should make it clear that I find De Waal’s methods were insensitive, suggesting a narrowness of focus on his part that reflected a lack of awareness of these animal’s social structure that I see as cruel, but, for the sake of this paper, I will agree that there is great value in discovering that on the most primitive level, animals care more about each other than material things.

The research I have done with various articles helped develop my position that empathy can be taught *and* inspired through art and art education and can be used as a tool to evoke empathy and kindness. The New York Times article, *You can’t teach empathy, but these picture books inspire it* (Palacio, August 25, 2017), was the first step on the road to my big question suggested that “you can only inspire it. Like its sister words, kindness and compassion, empathy is wakened in the soul” (Palacio, 2017, para 1). This comment sparked something inside of me that has ignited the passion to build my

project and has fueled the work going into the Empathy Pawject. Though, like Palacio, I do believe it is something that needs to be wakened within us, unlike Palacio, I also believe that it can be taught.

Artistic Work

Upon entering the Master of Art Education program at the University of Victoria, my goal has been, and continues to be, honing my skills as an artist and as a teacher. As for my studio work, I have attempted to create a view of animals as emotional beings to be valued and cared for. Animal welfare is my passion. Art is not simply the finished product. Whether it is an oil painting or a sculptured soapstone, it is the emotions, passions, values and social challenges that make up the artwork. During my time in the Masters of Art Education program, under the tutelage of skilled professionals and in the company of a creative, likeminded cohort, I have grown both as an artist and as a teacher. Now I recognize my role, not as a teacher with a Fine Arts background, but as an artist-teacher whose work in the studio and the classroom complements and enhances each endeavor. Nurturing the passions of young artists and encouraging them to share their ideas through their work is a responsibility I do not take lightly. My exploration of empathy in art through my studio work became the catalyst for building a program for my students in which they could develop empathy through their art.

Summer 1:

As a painter, I have always been inspired by the intensity in Georgia O'Keefe's work and her ability to drive conversation and spark controversy by a simple sensuality of a flower. As Ariella Budick says in her document, *Georgia O'Keeffe, Whitney Museum, New York*, "people love, or love to hate, Georgia O'Keeffe" (Budick, 2009, para. 1). I have always been attracted to the large portraits done by Chuck Close and the kitschy and wildly playful art by Jeff Koons. The bold use of colour and gentle

playfulness in these artist's work is something I aspire to in my own work. My first two years of study at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design introduced me to Harold Pearce's body of work called "Dogs." It 'is no wonder that with these inspirations, and my own passion for animals, that I paint large scale portraits, and more often than not, those portraits are of animals. Finding a way to share a message through bright, large scale paintings, has always been a goal of mine. Through my portraits of animals posed in school photographs in a series I completed called *Animal Picture Day*, I hope to share the message that all animals, human and other species alike, are precious, living, breathing beings capable of love, emotions, intelligent thought, and all are in need of kindness and empathy.

Much like the first day of my painting studio class as an undergraduate, I walked into the first studio class of my Master's degree with the same feeling: I knew exactly what I wanted to accomplish, but I didn't know if people would think it was strange. I also knew, somewhere in the back of my mind, that it likely would seem strange to paint large scaled animals wearing school uniforms, but I also knew that in the end this would become a safe space where it didn't really matter how odd my paintings looked. It has been my experience that following your passion and feeling strongly about your subject matter will attract people to cheer you on no matter how much your work differs from their own.

I wasn't surprised when the cohort I walked into that day became the greatest group of collaborators, supporters and a hive mind of artist-teachers full of incredible ideas, talents and skills ready to share with me. For the next three years I looked forward to my time in the studio at the University of Victoria.

3.1.1. Sampson

Before attending the first term of the M.Ed. Art program, I made visits to a local farm animal rescue center called *The Alice Sanctuary* <http://thealicesanctuary.com>, which is one-hour east of Balzac, Alberta. It is there that I met most of the animals that I would paint in my studio practice. I went armed with a camera and a sketchbook but in the end used both very little as I spent the majority of my time listening to stories told by the animals' caretaker and getting to know the resident animals. I met Oliver, an apple and banana loving pig who came to the Alice Sanctuary at just 6 weeks of age after being purchased from an online shopping website for entertainment purposes, then surrendered the next day (thealicesanctuary.com, 2020). Like most humans, Oliver has a best friend (Wendell, another resident pig); he is smart and affectionate and has food likes and dislikes. I also met Sampson and Ellis, two of The Alice Sanctuary's resident cows. Ellis has a cleft palate and would have been disposed of for this physical flaw had the sanctuary not stepped in to rescue him. At the time I visited, Ellis was still too small to play with Sampson, and some of the other bigger cows but since that time they have welcomed him into their group. I learned that cows bond and mourn the loss of a loved one similar to the way humans do. When one cow in their herd passes away, the rest of the herd surrounds that cow and, like humans, they shed tears of sorrow. After hearing this story about the mourning similarities between cows and humans, I was inspired to research some other similar behaviors we share with cows. I learned that cows form best friendships. In her Ph.D. thesis *Social bonds in dairy cattle: The effect of dynamic group systems on welfare and productivity*, Kristen Marie McLennan (2013) reviews

experiments that tell whether or not cow's feel stress when removed from the bonds they have made with other cows. In her abstract she says:

In order to assess the strength of these positive relationships between dyads and to investigate the importance of these relationships to cattle, a short term (30 minutes) separation test from the remainder of the herd was carried out. Cattle's responses to the challenge were assessed both physiologically and behaviorally. A significantly lower heart rate ($p < 0.01$) during the separation period was observed when cattle were separated with their preferred partner compared to the non-preferred partner, and significantly lower levels of behaviour suggestive of agitation ($p < 0.05$) were observed when they were with their preferred partner compared to when they were with the non-preferred partner. These results suggest that cattle were receiving social support from their preferred partners allowing them to have a reduced stress response to the social isolation test. (McLennan, 2013, p. 10)

McLennan's work concludes that cows may bond with another cow and if removed from their best friend they will feel an intense amount of stress and anxiety that can only be cured by returning the cow to their friend. To underscore the importance of having a familiar presence versus being paired with an unfamiliar cow, McLennan cites *Behavioral, cardiac and cortisol responses to brief peer separation and reunion in cattle* by Allain Boissy and Pierre Le Neindre (Boissy & Le Neindre, 1997), where a heifer who experiences social isolation then is reunited with its peers. When isolated, the heifer showed signs of distress through increased vocalization and increased heart rate. Both of these distressed signals declined when the heifer was reunited with its peers, but only if

the animal was already familiar with the cow they were being reunited with (McLennan, 2013, p. 57). This very specific emotional connection cows have for one another, but that we don't seem to have for them, is one reason I would end up painting Sampson first (see figure 1).

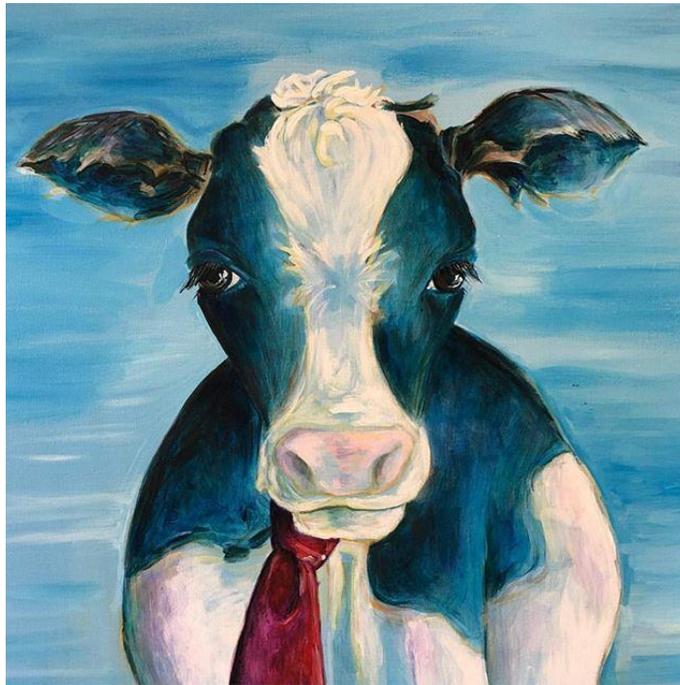


Figure 1. Sampson. Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches.

I realized quickly that if you have spent all of your time focusing on teaching art, and less on creating art in your career, your skills will be rusty! Painting has always been my passion, yet I was nervous and slow to start this painting of Sampson. In a strange way it felt as though I had forgotten basic skills. The first painting took much more time than I anticipated. Once it was complete, I was happy with it for no other reason than it was complete, and I could move on.

During my time at The Alice Sanctuary, I filled my sketchbook with quick sketches of new animal acquaintances. Chirp, a beautifully feathered chicken, was one of these animals. Chirp looks as though she is wearing black and white spotted pantaloons, which are really her spotted feathered legs and a fantastic lace shawl which are really her wings. Chirp walks with a confidence you might see on a model walking a runway. I loved her immediately. Matilda is a sheep with a dark face, large ears and thick plush wool. I knew she would be one of the first animals I would paint as I couldn't wait to find all of the colour that would belong to her coat. On the drive from the sanctuary I came upon a llama who was caught by the sun in such a way that it seemed to have a glowing halo. I named her Mary and I snapped a few photos for my workbook. Many of the animals I have painted came to me with names, for example all of the residents from the Alice Sanctuary are named by their caretakers. Any animals that I named were named with human names for the same reason they are painted with human clothing, in an attempt to humanize them so that people would think about treating them humanely. When I look at my work, I do not see a painting of a cow, I see a painting of Sampson.

With my sketchbook of images of each animal I met, and some I hadn't but had read about online, I was ready to start thinking about how I could turn these images into something that might spark some emotion with anyone viewing my art. I wanted people to see these animals as living breathing, thinking, feeling 'someone(s)' as opposed to 'something'. My ideas bounced around a lot from painting the animals in human-like settings, (for example, the kitchen making a plant based supper, or lounging in a garden on a lawn chair free from harm,) to having them grouped together in pairs of best friends for each painting. One constant was my desire to show their personalities in each portrait.

I started to think about school photographs and how precious these photos are to the parents and guardians who order them. I decided I would paint each animal as if it were in a school photograph. I teach at a uniformed school in Calgary, Alberta, and liked the idea of connecting to that, as well as making it more readable as a school photograph to viewers, by adding a school uniform tie to each animal.

3.1.2. Matilda

My second painting was Matilda (see Figure 2). With this painting, I realized that my emotional connection to the animals and the feelings I wanted to convey influenced the media I chose. For Matilda I purchased a liquid gold acrylic for her tie. I wasn't sure what I needed it for beyond the school tie, but I knew it would give the painting something it needed and something Matilda deserved for her portrait. In fact, it brings out the beautiful gold of her eyes. My confidence in my painting skills, though not completely intact, had grown a bit since Sampson's painting and I had more fun painting Matilda. I saw so many cool tones in her thick woolen fur and black face. My mistake here, in terms of technical skills, was using such a tiny brush to paint in these colours in Matilda's coat. Looking at Sampson and comparing him with Matilda I realized my technical skills were improving and coming back to me, for example I wasn't scrubbing the paint into the canvas with my paintbrush and colour choices were becoming more intuitive, but my confidence in allowing these paintings to loudly state their message about ethical treatment of animals, was still lacking.



Figure 2. Matilda. Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches.

3.1.2. Chirp

Chirp was next and the painting I was most excited to work on (see Figure 3). I was feeling more warmed up in terms of my skills. I wanted to experiment with different mediums for Chirp, but I also wanted to experiment with a different composition that may read more as a school portrait. I used a high fluid bright red acrylic paint for the red sections of Chirp's comb and wattle. I mixed a Prussian blue with a Raw Umber for the spots on Chirp's legs but ended up deciding they weren't bold enough and went over them again with a Carbon Black. Even though I felt that Chirp looked so confident in her photograph, I decided to go the opposite direction in the end and make her look approachable, sweet and possibly almost frightened. I enlarged her eyes, gave her droopy

eyelids and arched her back in such a way that she looked like she was slouching. It was my hope that I would spark empathy for this creature by making her look helpless. In one of my meetings with Dr. Emme, he mentioned how Chirp, especially her eyes, reminded him of work done by Margaret Keane. I was familiar with Keane's portraits of humans with large eyes. I started to research further into Keane's work and why she painted in the style she did. Was she too hoping to evoke a specific emotion for her subject through her art? In a New York Times article, when answering why her paintings of children's portraits kept getting sadder and sadder, Keane said: "Gradually it dawned on me that I was painting my own inner emotions. Those children were asking 'why are we here? What is life all about? Why is there sadness and injustice?' All those deep questions. Those children were sad because they didn't have the answers. They were searching" (Spindler, 1999 p. 64). Though I didn't read this quote until after I painted Chirp, it did resonate with me and the work that I was doing. Maybe Chirp had those giant sad eyes because that was the emotion I felt while I painted Chirp thinking of his life before he lived free from harm. The act of painting Chirp evoked empathy in me. Maybe, it is also the emotion I want to project onto Chirp, much like Keane's portraits, to convey a sense of sadness or injustice that the animal is feeling. In the end, this would be my favourite painting that I completed in the two years I spent working on this series. It is certainly not the most technically superior piece, but it is the piece I felt the most kinship with while completing it.

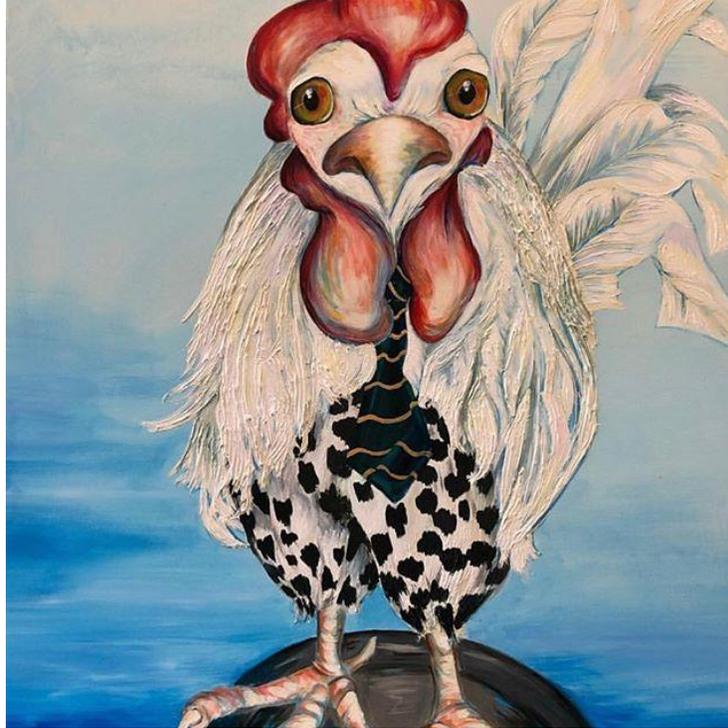


Figure 3. Chirp. Acrylic on Canvas, 35.8 x 35.8 inches.

3.1.4. Mary

Mary the llama was the final piece that I completed in my first year of the M.Ed. program in Victoria (see Figure 4). This is not my favourite piece because I had an emotional distance to the Llama that I did not experience with the other animals. I didn't have the same background information about the llama that I did with the other sanctuary animals so I didn't have the same emotional connection. However, this seemed to be everyone else's favourite and definitely the most technically well completed piece of the four I had painted at that point. I was able to respond more to it as a painting first and the personality second. Also, I was applying paint with more confidence, and colour theory became intuitive once more. Although Chirp's painting leans towards character, I feel it

has far more personality than Mary's portrait. When I painted Mary, I was not in tune to her personality either, I was focused on the lights, the shadows, lines and form that made up her portrait. So, although I did not feel the same empathy for Mary, and maybe because I had less empathy for Mary, I was able to apply more technical skills to her portrait. Dr. Bob Dalton stopped by our studio and paid each of our M.Ed. cohort members a visit. He saw my llama and said "This looks great. I would love to tell you to put that paint brush down because the painting is done!" And so, I put my paintbrush down and that painting was officially complete. My advisor, Dr. Mike Emme, came into the studio and said he could tell me, just by looking at each one of my paintings, which one I did first, second, third and fourth based on my confidence with the medium I was using. Even though it is technically my most successful art piece, it is the art piece I have the least emotional response to. This was a turning point for me with respect to building the empathy Pawject and realizing how important it is for my students to get as much background information as possible about their dogs. All of this experience served as a reminder to me to continue my practice as an artist-teacher throughout the school year in my career and not to forget to nurture the artist part of that title.



Figure 4. Mary. Acrylic on Canvas, 35.8 x 35.8 inches.

Summer 2:

The next summer's studio months arrived, and I was armed with 4 new large canvases and 4 new animals I wanted to paint. This time, the animals were not animals that I met at the farm sanctuary with the exception of Wendell the pig (Oliver the Pigs' best friend). I had always felt badly for not having the time to paint him in the first summer and was happy to paint him in the second summer. The new subjects were animals who, whether I knew them personally or not, in one way or another, directly affected me with their stories, or had in one way or another, taught me a lesson. I had found my confidence in the first summer and now could devote summer two to the

passion of ideas. Sy Montgomery's comment from *How to be a Good Creature*, validated my own art and my feelings towards animals' places in society. She states,

I can tell you that teachers are all around to help you: with four legs, or two, or eight or even none; some with internal skeletons, some without. All you have to do is recognize them as teachers and be ready to hear their truths (Montgomery, 2018, introduction)

This wonderful memoir describes Montgomery's living with and learning from 13 animals. Like Montgomery, I have always lived with the idea that animals were not put on this earth to serve us, but rather animals have been placed on this earth *with* us. Montgomery's book talks about how, after a falling out with her parents, her new family was built out of a bond with both humans and animals, including her pet pig named Christopher Hogworth. She recounts,

After my parents had disowned me, out of an assortment of unrelated, unmarried people and animals of many different species, Christopher helped create for me a real family – a family made not from genes, not from blood, but from love. (Montgomery, 2018, p 61)

Although I read Montgomery's book months after my second year of studio work, it spoke to my work so intensely. I feel that if I could allow people to see the magic and teachings that each animal has to offer, if they could understand the emotions and intelligence each creature has, and if they could empathize with them, they may change their thinking about how the animals are treated. I devoted my studio practice to painting

portraits of animals that I had either met in person, creatures who touched my life in some way, or that I had learned about through other likeminded individuals.

3.1.5. Mind Mapping

One of the first tasks we were given was to create a mind map to help our studio production along. Using the book *Mapping: The intelligence of Artistic Work*, by Anne West (2011) as inspiration, I began to create a web like map that would connect all of the goals and achievements I had made to date. The mind map that I created may have been the single best tool I had in my supplies box for the remainder of the time I would be creating in my studio space. Over the course of the next year it continued to grow with lists of names, goals, connections, communities, and ideas (See Figures 5 & 6). By mapping out where I was in my own studio practice, and where I wanted to go, I was able to also map out how my work was influencing the work I was doing with my students and where I hoped they would be with the Empathy Pawject lessons I would teach them.

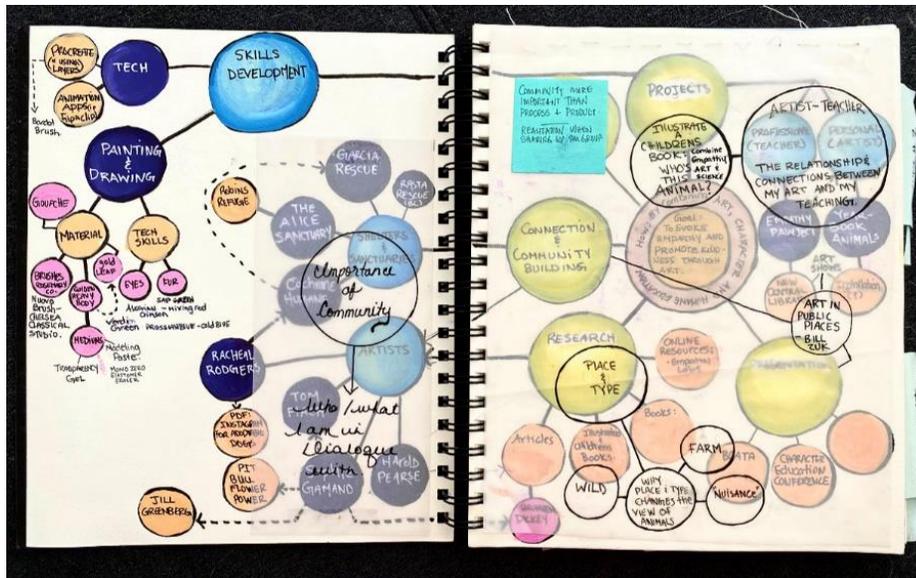


Figure 5. Mind map 1. Gouache on watercolour paper, 8.5 x 11 inches.

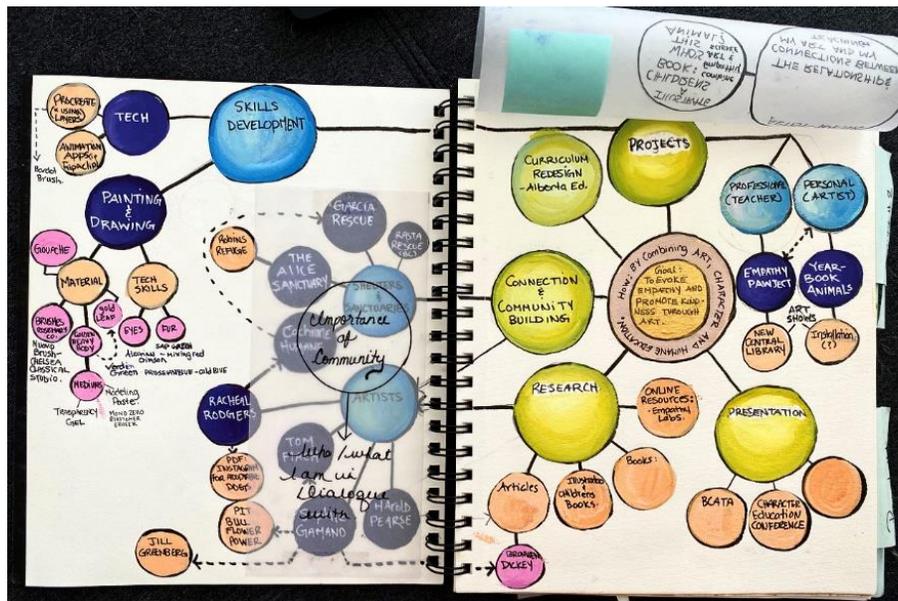


Figure 6. Mind map 2. Gouache on watercolour paper, 8.5 x 11 inches.

3.1.6. Roger

The first animal I painted in summer 2 was Roger the Raccoon (see Figure 7). Roger would be the only animal portrait I would paint holding a condiment item, or food of any kind, for that matter. I chose to do this to for two reasons: 1) Roger was a real raccoon who really loved peanut butter, and 2) to create a contrast against the ideas that Raccoons' are pests. They are much less domesticated than some of the other animals that I had painted so far. I wanted to paint an animal that a viewer may not immediately think of as one that is easily integrated into a human setting. Growing up, my grandmother had a raccoon who made its home in her woodshed. He didn't cause her any real trouble, and she was a tremendously kind-hearted soul, so that woodshed became his home as much as the house was her home. On Sunday visits when my family would travel from Moncton NB to my grandmother's community, Norton in rural NB, she would allow us to go out to the woodshed and give the raccoon a container of peanut butter. Despite their reputations for being aggressive, I think this raccoon knew we loved him and had no reason to be aggressive. He would always wait for us to set the container down then he would use his hands, just like any of us would do, to twist off the top. My mother once told me that when she was a child, another baby raccoon got into the farmhouse and the kids, chased it around the house and up the stairs. The raccoon stopped on a staircase halfway up and covered its eyes with its hand. She said they all had a moment of empathy understanding that this wasn't a game for the raccoon and that they had scared the poor thing. This story, along with my own memory of Roger, made me want to paint him the way I had remembered him – as a precious peanut butter holding creature full of personality who, I like to think, learned to love us as much as we loved

him immediately. The painting process for Roger though, didn't go as smoothly as I had hoped. Throughout the previous school year, I didn't keep my own promise to myself to continue my art practice. During the school year my focus on the children's learning had become my primary focus and my biggest responsibility. In looking back, I felt that I simply did not have the time to devote to my own work. A shift happened in my studio work that was almost as if I had pressed a pause button and would allow myself to resume my own art practice once the school year had passed. The problem with this type of thinking, and a trap that is easy to fall into when you are passionate about your teaching work, is that you miss a great opportunity to bring your own experiences and passions as an artist to the classroom as the teacher. My skills had once again gotten rusty and I had to reteach myself to make bold brush strokes and trust my intuition.



Figure 7. Roger. Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 29 inches.

3.1.7. Lion

My next painting was of a lion (see Figure 8). The lion I painted was one who, that summer, was hunted by a couple from Alberta on a trip they had taken in hopes to gain a photograph of themselves with the lion they unfairly shot with a gun, as a trophy. This story hit the news and with it came many heated debates and comments about the rights of the lion, or oddly, the rights people felt the Albertan couple had to shoot the lion (Rodriquez, 2019). It was and will be the only painting I did in this series that I know is politically driven and causes me a great deal of sadness. Unlike the other animals in my series, this lion did not have the opportunity to live his life free from harm. The lion is the only subject without a name. I decided to leave him nameless to represent all of the lions whose lives are lost to sport hunting. I experimented a florescent pink high flow acrylic paint to try and make this lion as bright and magical looking as possible. Though I liked the outcome of the bright colours against the muted brown on his fur, this painting definitely did not look like it was part of the same series. He was missing a school tie, the composition wasn't right for a school photograph as his mane flew off the corners and edges of the canvas, and he didn't look gentle or kind; he looked angry which I guess is how I felt when I painted him. Although I did not meet or build a relationship with the lion, I was able to put myself in his place and empathize with him. The way in which my anger over his unjust demise manifested on the canvas surprised even me. In the Empathy Pawject lesson we do not touch on animal cruelty but having the age appropriate background information on their dogs, especially the things their dogs like, helps the students form a personal bond with them and ultimately manifests in the creation of their work.



Figure 8. Lion. Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches.

3.1.8. Wendell

Oliver's best friend Wendell was my next portrait and he was a breath of fresh air after the intensity of painting the lion (see Figure 9). I painted him a stark white school dress shirt to go with his tie to break up some of the pink on the page. He ended up looking more like a portrait of a businessman than a school portrait, but he looked happy all the same and that is what I wanted to achieve. I knew that he once did not live a life free from harm and now he did. Although Wendell may not have known his life was in peril, I did and the joy I feel seeing him safe and sound is a gift.

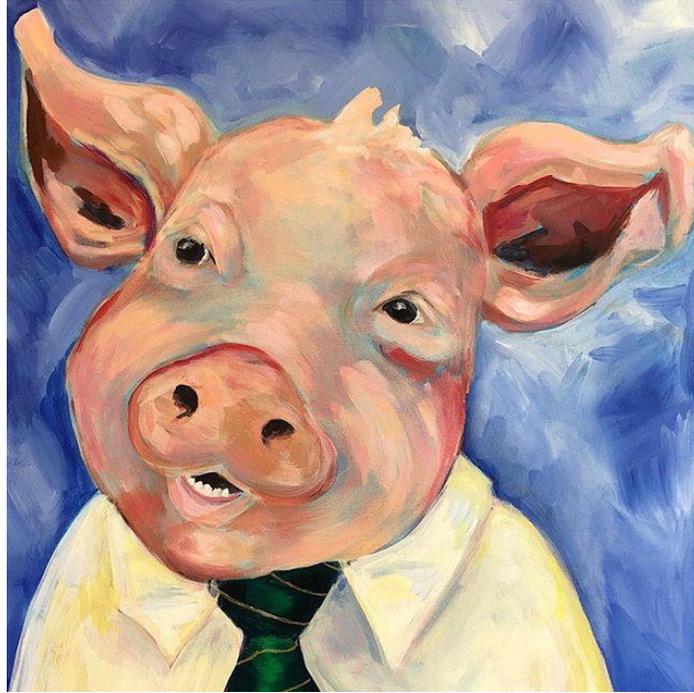


Figure 9. Wendell. Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches.

3.1.9. Walter

My last painting that summer was of a deer I named Walter (see Figure 10). The portrait of this deer was initially the result of wanting to play around with colours that Dr. Alison Shields had told me about in a conversation about her own pallet. She used a lot of Alizarin Crimson Hue, Prussian Blue Hue & Viridian Hue Permanent and I wanted to use this pallet in the painting of the deer. The choice of painting a deer was simply because of the abundance of them in Victoria and how unafraid they are of humans. The first week of the summer in Victoria, while I was walking to class, a large deer walked up to me and for the first time in my life I was scared of a deer. I think he was just hopeful for an apple or snack he likely gets daily from other students. I loved this interaction, though it seemed incredibly unnatural. To try a more muted earth toned pallet, I painted this deer

with only colours that were naturally found in the deer. In truth, this was at the time my least favourite painting which may be in part because I didn't use all the wild colours I typically do, so it felt unfamiliar, but after reflection it was because I only had an encounter with the deer, and it didn't have a name. I decided that, as with the Lion, the act of giving the creature a name is a way of creating a relationship with that animal. In the end I named this deer Walter.



Figure 10. Walter. Acrylic on Canvas, 24 x 24 inches.

3.1.10 Digital Drawings

The last artworks that I created within the first two summers of my studies were completed digitally. I took a digital art class instructed by Dr. Michelle Wiebe where I learned to keep my theme but switch my brain from using big sweeping brush strokes on large canvases to small-scale mark making on an iPad using an apple pencil as my only tool; and I loved every moment of that experience! It was difficult to learn to look for the tools that you need as opposed to relying on your hand to just *do* the things you need it to do. For example, If I wanted to blend my colours in, I had to go to a section of the

Procreate drawing app I was using and select a blending tool, whereas I would normally just blend with my paintbrush intuitively. I learned how to use lots of the tools in the app with lots of room for learning left. I used my own settings for the backgrounds of my art pieces: the kitchen of the house I was renting for the summer, and the studio space at the university that I was using that summer. Using the artist, Subway Doodler, <https://subwaydoodle.com/pages/contact> as my inspiration, I drew my own creatures with the same goal as I had with my paintings, to evoke empathy for them from their viewers. Both have large droopy eyes, concerned expressions and are doing something “human” (writing on a laptop, or painting a portrait...possibly a difficult one of a deer) (see Figures 11 & 12). Unlike painting with traditional tools and a canvas, the challenge of painting digitally was learning how to switch from sweeping hand and arm movements to tinier wrist and finger movement as well as changing from the control I always feel when blending paint colours on a pallet. I enjoyed that you could create art without worry about making mistakes as mistakes are so easily corrected when working digitally. There is not an undo button on a canvas, for example. The one similarity between traditional painting and digital painting is the empathy that I felt for the characters I painted and tried to evoke for them through my viewers. This was important for me to experience as it leads me to believe that I could lead a digital art class with the same goals of evoking empathy with my students.



Figure 11. Digital Drawing I



Figure 12. Digital Drawing II

In *Artist Teacher: A Philosophy for Creating and Teaching*, G. James Daichendt (2010) talks about the importance of embracing both the artist and the educator in your career and your day to day life. He says “artist-teacher, when used properly, is actually a philosophy for teaching. It does not presuppose an artistic lifestyle but uses the individual talents and learned skills or techniques of the artist and circumvents them into the teaching profession” (Daichendt, 2010, p. 61). He goes on to explain that “it is not just a focus on arts or art making but the application of those ideas in the classroom” (Daichendt, 2010, pp. 61–62). I read this in my first year of the Master’s program and it set me up for success as I began to view myself as not only an art teacher but also an artist. When you put your heart and soul into your craft you are so much more passionate and so much more prepared when passing that knowledge on as a lesson to others. Before I knew exactly what the Empathy Pawject would look like, I knew that I wanted to teach children the importance of kindness to and value the lives of all creatures, and I wanted to do that through art. My studio practice of animal portraiture was also a practice of developing empathy, and evoking empathy in others. Because of this, I am better equipped to teach my grade 4 students about empathy and painting portraits of their own animals in need.

Finally, my studio experience has taught me to embrace conversations from people whose ideas about an animal’s place in society differ greatly from my own. It has taught me not to shy away from opinions about my art that may not be favorable to all. During a studio conversation with my peers, a colleague disagreed with my views that the couple from Alberta who shot the lion, were in the wrong. This person believed that sport hunting helps the economy in third world countries. I do not believe that this is the only

way, nor do I believe it is an ethical way to raise money. I could have had a conversation where we discussed other ways that people could help a third world country make money, instead I remained silent. This was not a good way to evoke empathy or encourage dialogue or change. The problem with hushing your own views is that you can never inspire the change you hope to. These different ideas and opinions can spark conversation. I always intended to evoke thoughtful conversation with my art. Controversy brings about dialogue and dialogue has the power to bring about change. The process of researching my question and building the Empathy Pawject awakened in me my responsibility to be true to my convictions while respecting the opinions of others. For example, I am very cognizant of the fact that many of my student's families may have dogs from breeders or want to purchase dogs from breeders. Although I disagree with it, I empathize with breed specific desires and rather than try to make families feel badly about their choices, I teach the course in hopes that maybe they will turn to a shelter another time.

The Empathy Pawject

4.1 The Empathy Pawject

The *Empathy Pawject* is currently a nine-lesson project designed for elementary-aged children. It began in the fall of 2018 and had its second year in winter of 2020. The first year was its pilot year and the second year I applied for ethics approval through the university of Victoria to formally research the impact of the project.

4.1.1 The Lessons as Planned

Each student in the project, regardless of whether they participated in the research aspect, received a profile of an adoptable dog that contains the photo or photos of their dog, the shelter that their dog is located at, and a story about their dog. The photos and stories used to create the profiles were generously provided by Rachael Rodgers (@trailsandbears) or *Pawsitive Match Rescue* (<https://pawsitivematch.org/>). The student learns about their dog, presents information about their dog to their classmates then participate in classes that teach them about empathy as well as a series of art lessons to focus drawing, observation and painting skills that will support creating painted portraits of their dogs. Using a series of books geared towards empathy (*I am Human: A book of Empathy* (2018) by Susan Verde, *You, Me and Empathy* (2017) by Jayneen Sanders) character education books about compassion (*How to Heal a Broken Wing* (2017) by Bob Graham), and humane education books (*The Not Bad Animals* (2020) by Sophie Corrigan, *Ginger Finds a Home* (2003) by Charlotte Voake, *How to Be a Good Creature: A Memoir in Thirteen Animals* by Sy Montgomery (2018), *Gowanus Dogs* (1999) by Johnathan Frost, *Can I Be Your Dog?* (2018) By Troy Cummings and *The One & Only Wolfgang, From Pet Rescue to One Big Happy Family* (2019) by Steve Grelg) the

empathy lessons help students gain a clearer understanding of empathy, sympathy, compassion, kindness and how to show empathy to a creature who cannot express their emotions using words. Through the final lesson in the course called “Dear Dog” The students write a letter to their dog. This gives them an opportunity to tell their dog about themselves, ask their dog questions, tell their dog about the experience of learning about them and painting their portrait but most importantly, it teaches the students about the intrinsic rewards in doing something kind, even if you cannot receive anything in return.

It is a goal of mine to expand the *Empathy Pawject* to other grade levels. Further research is needed to understand the level of developmental difference in each age group. Currently the Empathy Pawject is created for a group of grade 4 students. Having age appropriate lessons and discussions excludes conversations about animal cruelty, for example, and focuses on the dog’s future. One parent of the 2019-2020 Empathy Pawject group commented, "I liked that the Empathy Pawject used rescue dogs and their particular circumstances to teach the kids empathy, and sympathy in a way that was digestible for 9 year-olds and that helped expand their understanding of sadness and unfairness." This is something I would want to maintain for any age group.

All of the step by step lessons, and resources such as books and articles, a gallery of student example work and news updates and current events, as well as links to the social media Instagram page, are available on the website at www.empathypawject.com.

4.1.2. Adaptations and Extensions through Social Media

All of the student’s work is posted on the @empathy.pawject Instagram page where the shelters location is geotagged, and hashtags are applied to their post to grab the

attention of anyone following those hash tags (for example: #shelterdogsofinstagram #adoptdontshop #adoptabledogs #empathy #arteducation #humaneeducation).

The act of developing the Instagram page was always intended to celebrate the children's work as well as raise awareness for each adoptable dog. It ended up becoming a much larger part of the project as it added the element of community building. Not only were we drawing an audience of other schoolteachers, art educators, humane educators, animal advocates and character education enthusiasts, we were also making a connection with the adopted and foster families of the dogs the students were learning about. When the students completed their "Dear Dog" letters they either put it in a "please post" pile or a "This letter is Private. Please do not post" pile. I double check with the students who asked to have their letters posted, then I placed them on the social media site and tagged the humane shelter the dog belonged to as well as the photographer whose photograph is used in the profile photo, unless permission was given by the shelter to use any of their volunteer's photos in which case I would give credit to the shelter. What happened next was a wonderful example of community building: through these connections many of the dog's new families were directed to look at our site and wrote messages back to the children from their dogs. Some of the dogs had their very own Instagram pages and reached out to the student artist that way to congratulate them on a job well done or telling the students a story about the dog's new life. For example, one of the dog's owners commented on the post of a dog the student painted in a mountain scene, saying that the dog now spends lots of time exploring mountains. Another one of the dog's foster parents saw their dog's portrait and reached out to say how much the dog loved belly rubs and hugs. This connection to the real life dogs meant a great deal to these students which was

evident in their smiles, inquiries about their dog and cheerful clapping when I had news to share with them.

Using social media as a part of these lessons came with a steep learning curve. In the first year with the pilot program, Instagram had the number of 'likes' (this is the amount of times a viewer clicks a heart shaped button on the post) counted and available for anyone to see. At the beginning of the program I seemed to be posting every day at around the same time which was 9:00am (Mountain Time) just before teaching my first period. Each day I would notice that around noon each photo was receiving anywhere from 50-60 'likes' and 1-2 comments. The amount of times someone clicked the button only mattered to me as I wanted to ensure the number stayed consistent from one post to another in case the students were keeping track. One day I posted when I arrived to work at 7:00am and by 3:00pm the post only had about 17 'likes.' This attention matters a great deal to many adults that I spoke to about traffic received on Instagram so I knew it had to potential to really affect the students. I solved this by calling everyone that I knew and asked them to help out. By 5:00pm this post had the average amount between 50-60 'likes.' I knew I couldn't rely on friends and family each time something like this happened, so I began to research high and low traffic times for Instagram. I found a website called Sprout Social which had a variety of heat map graphs showing the highest level of engagement for different types of posts (for example: Nonprofit, education, healthcare, and consumer goods.) I focused on Education and Nonprofit maps and followed the times lines to a tee. The darkest areas indicate the heaviest traffic times where the lightest areas indicate the least amount of traffic. (see figures 13 & 14)

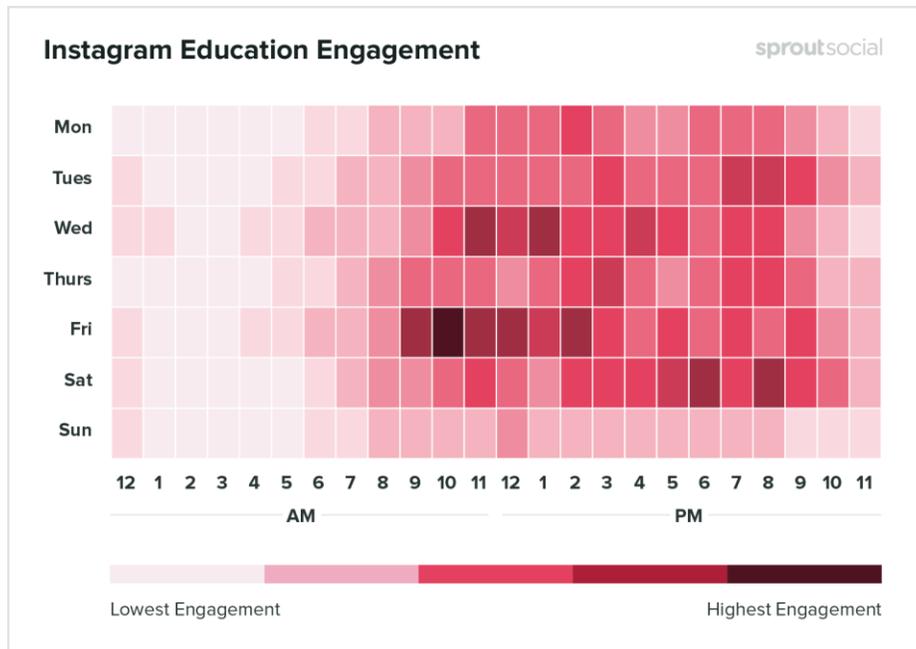


Figure 13. Instagram Education Engagement Graph Retrieved from: sproutsocial.com

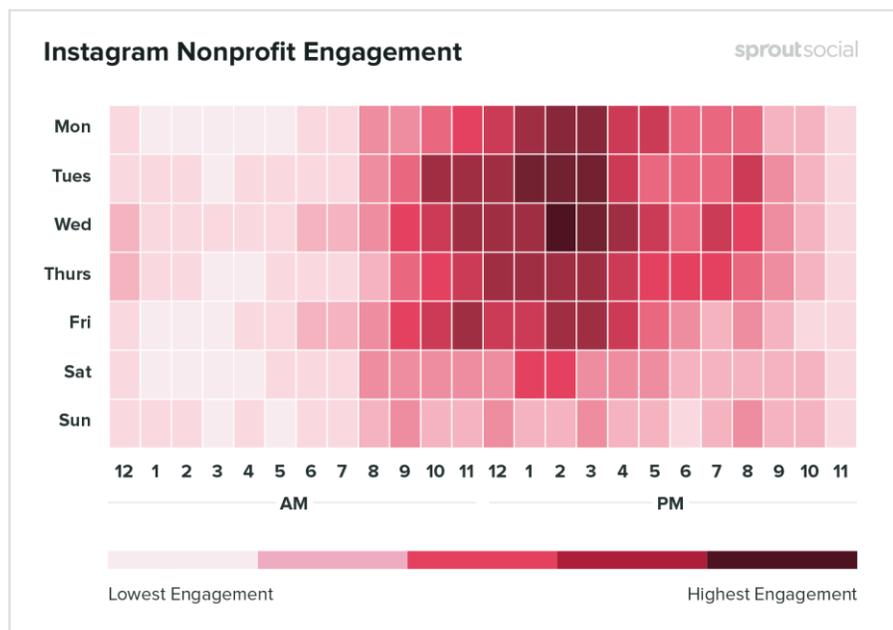


Figure 14. Instagram Nonprofit Engagement Graph Retrieved from: sproutsocial.com

It was astounding what a big difference this made. I began posting their work during the darkest times noted on the graphs for each day of the week and the number of engagements rose to an average of 70 ‘likes’ per post.

In November of 2019, before the second year of the Empathy Pawject began, Instagram made ‘like’ counts private so that only the owner of the account could see the number. This was a very positive change. Although at this point the audience had widened and it had a considerably larger follower list, it was important for the students not to focus on the number of likes each post received but I could see how much attention and awareness we were raising.

Once of the aspects of the audience growth that had a positive impact on the children’s connection for their dog was the increase of owner and foster contributions to comments online. Engaging the community through social media was a way of getting the community to reinforce the empathy lessons. This was an important part of the Empathy Pawject. It gave the student an opportunity to be a part of a larger community outside of the school. Building on the connection the student’s made with the dogs through the dogs’ profile, the student’s developed a deeper connection and empathy for their dogs through social media: they wrote letters to their dogs, some of the dogs’ owners wrote back to them, they checked in on the dogs’ stories online, and they read comments people would leave on the post of their paintings. Some students and their families took it upon themselves to physically go to the shelter that their dog was tagged in online, to meet their dog in person and ask the rescue volunteers questions about their dogs.

From that first messages and words of encouragement the students received from the dog's families, Rachael Rodgers, Sophie Gamand, and the animal shelters, community has been a constant source of strength for this project. It reminds the students that what they are doing makes a positive impact, and that there are others out there also making a positive impact on the world. During the first pilot year of the project I applied to have the students work shown at the New Central Public Library in Calgary. The proposal was accepted and we held the show from April – March 2019. A local radio station in Calgary called X92.9 offered to put the show on their events page online and The Cochrane Eagle did a feature story on the Empathy Pawject. Rachael Rogers and a member from the Cochrane Humane Society attended the show's opening night reception. The following year the CBC Calgary contacted me and asked to do a feature story about the Empathy Pawject. Through these community members, the project received attention, the children had a deep sense of pride knowing that their work was being spoken about and shown, and the humane shelters in Calgary and surrounding areas were being highlighted. More information about these important members of the community we have been connecting with are located in the Community section of the About page on the Empathy Pawject website, and the news articles are located in the News page of the website.

4.2. The Research as Planned

In the 2019-2020 year of the Empathy Pawject, 81 students were invited to participate in the project. And 58 students (72%) had parents who signed consent and participated in the research aspect of the project. All student, regardless of their choice to

participate in the research, received the same lessons and all names on the consent forms remained anonymous until the end of the project.

4.2.1. The Findings

54 of the parents who gave consent for the research aspect of the project (93%) returned a per-project survey which allowed me to gain a sense of whether they felt their child understood empathy before participating in the project. To protect each student's and parent's identities, the students are labeled with a number and their names are not in this paper. The results were interesting: in the parent's pre-project survey (see figure 15), 74% of the parents felt that their child understood what empathy meant. When I compared that to the results of the student pre-project survey, which was provided to them in the classroom by a neutral third party, only 32% of the students understood what empathy is (see figure 16). This, when coupled with the answers students gave to the question "How can we show empathy to an animal," causes me to believe that the parents feel that their child understand empathy because they are showing empathetic behavior at home. Answers given, such as Student 1: "we could show empathy to an animal by treating it as if they were a human" and Student 38: "We could show empathy to an animal by giving it a home, food and water and watching its emotions to see what it needs." Were among the 56% of students (see figure 17) whose answers indicated that they knew how to show empathy to an animal. This growth from 32% who knew what empathy is indicates that more of the children have empathetic responses but they were not able to define what that emotion is. There was still room for growth as that left 24% of the students who felt as though they did not understand what empathy is and did not know how to show empathy to an animal. Several of those 24% whose answers indicated

that they did not understand how to show empathy to an animal, did indicate that they know how to be kind. Some answers to the question included: Student 63: “We can show empathy to an animal by giving it love and kindness.” Student 31: “by not being rude to it” and Student 30: “You could write about that animal and say in your writing how you would feel if you were that animal.” Based on these results I feel it is likely that all students have the ability to show empathy, and some already show empathy. It was my job as their educator to guide this knowledge to the surface so that they could actively practice being empathetic to animals and humans alike.

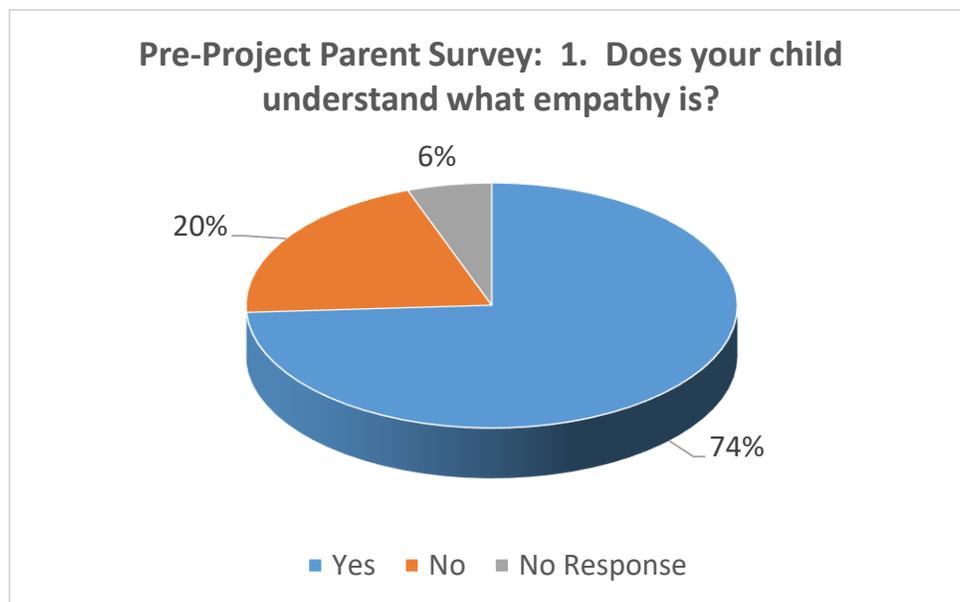


Figure 15. Pre-Project Survey for Research 1

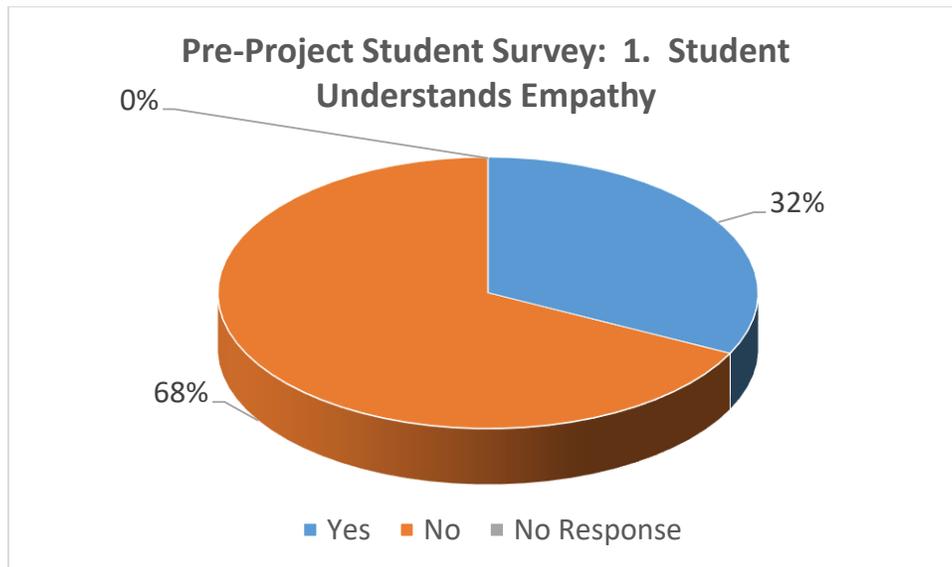


Figure 16. Pre-Project Survey for Research 2

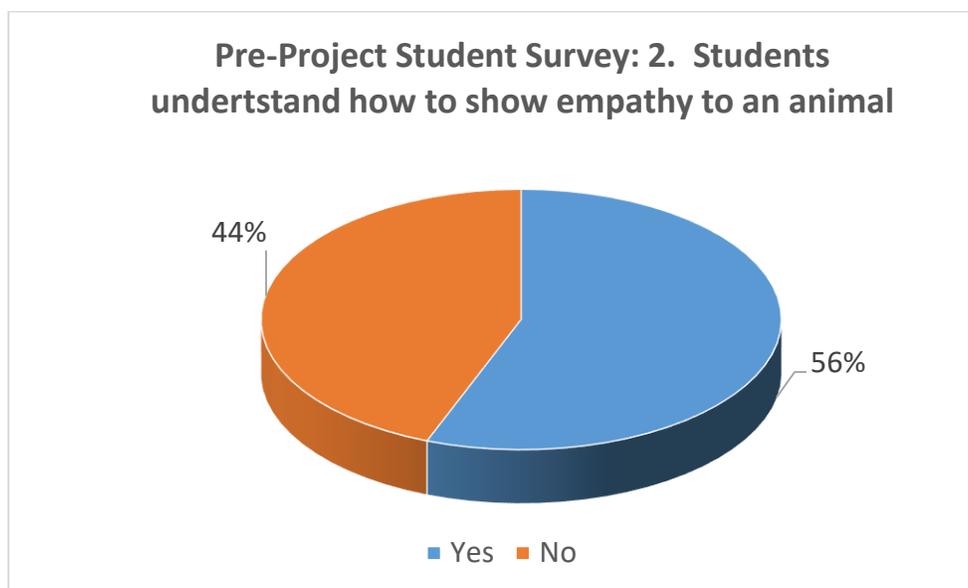


Figure 17. Pre-Project Survey for Research 3

Conclusion

Previous to the Empathy Pawject teaching experience, I developed lesson plans that emphasized technical skills. The Empathy Pawject was a different balance of art and passion. In my own work I discovered what a significant role that passion plays in the artistic outcomes. For example, the llama I painted focused more on technique and less on passion, whereas the chicken, Chirp, was a product of passion more so than technique. I noticed that I needed to strike a balance in my own work with this which begs the question: when do I ask my students to create with passion, when do I ask them to create with technique, and when do I ask them to find a balance between the two? The combination of the character and humane education lessons, and the art based lessons designed in the Empathy Pawject provides a good space for students to explore creating with passion and with technical skills.

My journey had me investigate two questions: How is empathy defined? Does humane education and kindness to animals positively impact impacts a child's outlook? My conclusion is that Empathy is defined by a person's ability to feel what another is feeling and compassion is when they act upon that feeling. We can gauge a student's ability to think empathetically by asking gentle questions such as "how do you think that person, or animal feels? Why do you suppose they feel joy? Sadness? How do you think you might feel in this situation?" A student in my class was so moved by the work the volunteers at the animal rescue centers do with the animals and inspired by the work that we did in the Empathy Pawject that his mother contacted me to tell me he wanted to continue his own version of the Empathy Pawject over the summer. This student started his project where he painted his own dog, turned those images into cards and sent them to

the various shelters around Calgary to say thank you for the work that they are doing. This is one of the many stories that came from parents that solidifies my belief that by connecting art and humane education, an educator has the ability to positively impact a child's outlook on the world and strengthen their ability to think empathetically.

What is interesting is that, when talking about societies empathy deficit, Krznaric writes, "Social networks are good at spreading information but – at least to date – less adept at spreading empathy" (Krznaric, 2014, p. xvii). In contrast to what Krznaric's states here, I see great potential for social media to generate empathy on a large scale just as indicated in his Habit 6. As a matter of fact, I am already seeing the benefits of showing the children's work and celebrating their learning about empathy and how it is encouraging change and sparking empathy in others, through social media.

In The *Empathy Pawject* grade 4 students learned about "Conceptual Perspective Taking" which refers to the ability to put themselves in someone else's (or an animal's) shoes (Ziff, 2017). At the beginning of the project my assumption was that students could not learn empathy, but I may be able to inspire it in them. Palacio (2017) said, "the tricky part of teaching empathy to children is that you can't really teach it. You can only inspire it" (para. 1). But my findings, based on the evidence from the research of this project, is that teachers can do both, teach and inspire empathy to children. An educator can teach the definition and help hone an understanding through discussions and activities but, the teaching aspect will be much smaller than the inspiring aspect. Empathy will be evoked through the act of learning about and painting an animal in need through the project.

By combining teaching with actions and creative experience, students will learn to recognize an ability they already possess. For example, one of the children in the 2019-

2020 year of the Empathy Pawject received a profile of a dog named Magoo who was looking to be rehomed to a family who would be patient while they earned Magoo's trust. The student raised their hand after reading over the profile and said, "I get this dog. I think that I was meant to get this dog. I am a shy person so I understand how Magoo feels." This was before receiving any of the lessons on empathy I had planned for the class. This is an example of how, although the students may not be able to define empathy or understand the concept yet, they do have the ability inside of them and some of them are already acting empathetically. It is our job as educators to guide this knowledge to the surface.

As the social media extensions to the original lesson showed, community plays an important role in this project. Not only did the student get to help a cause in their community through their own work, but the project itself gathered interest from local newspapers, radio stations, artists, and educators around the world. I believe that anytime you teach about the plight of an animal, the opportunity to evoke empathy arises. It not only evoked empathy in the children, but their work evoked empathy in others. To see commentary on the children's artwork please go to @empathy.pawject on Instagram.

It was humbling to see these children embrace this project with such genuine interest and caring for the welfare of their dogs. From a community's point of view, a student's point of view, and an art educator's point of view, this is an extremely worthwhile project that yields real results. It evokes empathy and raises awareness for animal welfare and I am excited to share this with other teachers.

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