

## **Affective Neuroscience: The Feeling of what Happens\***

**Beth Ament PhD  
Retired Art Education Professor  
Eastern Michigan University  
eament@me.com**



*“When we educators fail to appreciate the importance of students’ emotions, we fail to appreciate a critical force in students’ learning. One could argue, in fact, that we fail to appreciate the very reason that students learn at all.”*

Immordino-Yang and Damasio 2007

*“Treating emotions as tools rather than as enemies should become the primary goal of education. To use them as tools we must have control and self-awareness. This awareness of our own feelings is central to the development of mind”* Zull, 2011

### **Questions to be addressed in this presentation:**

- 1. What are some key implications of neuroscience research on the role that emotion plays in teaching and learning?**
- 2. How might this research be applied when educators are planning and implementing experiences in the arts?**
- 3. How does this type of educational planning differ from past and current practice in VAE?**
- 4. Why is this research important at this time?**

### **Overview of Presentation:**

Participants will consider growing evidence from studies in the neurosciences that propose emotional processing plays an essential role in learning. These studies support that rather than inhibiting learning, emotional processing consistently plays a critical role in sound decision-making and in developing healthy social-emotional behavior. Though more collaboration between neuroscientists and educators is needed, I propose art educators can use existing peer reviewed NS studies focusing on emotion as a guide for planning and facilitating experiences in the arts. Selecting art experiences that work with emotions as a guide can help students focus on tasks that make sense to them enabling them to get to next step in their search for meaning. Developing healthy ways to work with emotions facilitates reflection and analysis helping students to organize and remember what they find significant. Nurturing social-emotional growth through meaningful student-centered art experiences can help tackle some of contemporary education’s pressing problems that rational thought alone cannot address.

\* from Antonio Damasio’s *The Feeling of What Happens* 1999