# SCHOOL CHANGE THROUGH ARTS INSTRUCTION:
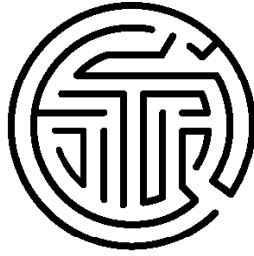## *CONTEXTUAL ARTS EDUCATION IN THE NEW YORK CITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR ARTS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM*

CENTER FOR CHILDREN & TECHNOLOGY

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# SCHOOL CHANGE THROUGH ARTS INSTRUCTION:

*CONTEXTUAL ARTS EDUCATION IN THE NEW YORK CITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR ARTS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM*

PREPARED BY

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ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL
RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, NEW ORLEANS, APRIL 2000

CENTER FOR CHILDREN & TECHNOLOGY

# INTRODUCTION

In 1997, the Annenberg Challenge provided substantial seed money to fund the New York City Arts Partnership program, to be administered by a newly formed non-profit agency called the Center for Arts Education (CAE).  The Arts Partnership program, as it is known, funds partnerships, between schools and cultural organizations, that are designed to support school change and student learning through the reintroduction of the arts to the core curriculum.  The creation of this initiative was a significant milestone in the history of arts education in New York City, which had seen its arts programs all but eradicated two decades earlier.

This report presents the background for the program's inception; the variety of contexts and approaches found in the 81 funded schools; and our research strategies for determining the program's impact on the partnering organizations, teaching practices, and student lives and learning. The report centers on the idea that local context influences both the nature of and the impact of instruction and learning, and that only by closely considering a partnership's context (which includes its goals for the project, how they in fact unfold, and the structural and philosophical "assets" it brings to the project) can we begin to determine its impact on students and schools.

## New York City Public Schools and Arts Education

The Arts Partnership program has stimulated and in many ways led the most comprehensive renaissance in arts education that the city has seen in the last quarter century.  In 1975, in response to a fiscal crisis, New York City schools began dismantling their arts education programs.  Prior to 1975, the city's schools featured extensive and high quality arts education in most schools, crowned by a highly select and prestigious group of specialized arts talent schools such as Music and Art High School and the Performing Arts High School (the Fame school). The arts curriculum was largely a classroom-based, scope and sequence curriculum supplemented in some schools by short-term artist-in-residency programs.  Some cultural organizations had developed more thorough relationships with schools, but partnerships were not the predominant approach for delivering arts instruction.

Shortly after the 1975 fiscal crisis, some schools began to use their limited funds to hire cultural organizations and artists to restore some arts experiences or instruction to their curriculum.  In the intervening years, more structured efforts such as the Board of Education-supported Arts Partners project and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund-supported School Partners project came and went.  In 1992, the Board of Education and the City Schools Chancellor's office, seeking ways to restore arts education to the schools, commissioned two separate studies of the status of arts education.  The studies concluded that it would cost $100 million a year in 1992 dollars to restore the arts to their 1975 levels.  The policy makers decided that that level of funding was not possible.

In 1996, after an expression of interest by the Annenberg Challenge, the city's Department of Cultural Affairs commissioned a new needs assessment by Arts Vision, Inc. In response to their documentation and recommendations, CAE was created to administer the Arts Partnerships grants and to develop and support the partnerships among New York City schools and cultural and community-based organizations, colleges and universities. The programs together serve more than 50,000 students and 2,000 teachers.

CAE has raised $36 million in four years to support these partnerships. The magnitude of this program alone would make it the most significant structural change in arts education in New York since 1975. But the Arts Partnership program also stimulated the creation of two other arts education programs. The Empire State Partnership project, funded by the New York State Council on the Arts and the State Education Department, has since funded 56 cultural organization-based partnerships with 84 separate cultural organizations, 113 schools, 2,200 teachers, and more than 34,000 students across the state. Project ARTS (Arts Restoration Throughout the System), a city school arts program supported by the Office of the Mayor and the Chancellor's office of the New York City Board of Education has earmarked more than $150 million for certified arts personnel, materials, and programs since its inception in 1997. Project Arts now makes arts education support available to all 1,100 New York City public schools. Together these programs bring resources to the NYC schools valued at the amount recommended in the 1992 studies. Inflation at the year 2000 level and the addition of 200,000 new students to the school system cut into the allocations' effectiveness, but the resources are substantial, and their expected impact on the schools and students is significant.

From the beginning, city and state leadership supported these initiatives. Representatives of The New York City Board of Education, the Office of the Mayor, the United Federation of Teachers, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the Executive Office of New York State, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York State Education Department came together in precedent setting partnerships. The gathering of these offices and institutions around the common cause of arts education constitutes a significant structural change resulting from the initial partnership effort funded by Annenberg.

Almost all schools in the city now have Project ARTS; about 100 are served by at least two of the initiatives, and some have services from all three programs. The school arts curriculums, however, vary considerably from site to site and could not be described in the same uniform and consistent terms as the pre-1975 curriculum. Each cultural organization is unique in its art forms, resources, activities, and sometimes its constituent community. Each school is different in its configuration of arts education resources. The CAE Partnership and the Empire State Partnership programs stress relating the arts to the schools' core academic curriculum, but the academic subject area connections vary from school to school. In both cases the design envisions schools having sequential arts instruction by certified arts instructors, as well as having partnerships with local cultural organizations to strengthen curriculum, teaching practices, community, and ways of learning and knowing in the school.

## CAE Program Design

The Arts Partnership program's approach to arts instruction is grounded in a "theory of action" that suggests that the arts, their associated skills and aesthetic contexts, and their integration into the complete education of the young will enhance students' mental, emotional, and social growth.  A person has not had a complete education if the arts have been lacking. The four-year grants are designed to promote and support school change through the development of partnerships between schools and cultural organizations. In its request for proposals, CAE described its vision of program impact on a school in this way:

> *Instruction will be different; learning and the ways of knowing that students use will be different; community relations will be different; some forms of school governance will change; time schedules and space usage will be different; curriculum will be altered.  Not only will these schools be different, but also they will be improved.*

Introducing long-term partnerships to the program changed the formula from what had been the staple of sequential, skills-based arts education by certified teachers.  The partnerships were distinctive, unique to individual organizations and sites, and brought new "context" to bear.  Key assumptions in the design included: (1) all students are entitled to strong and rich arts instruction; (2) the cultural resources of New York City could strengthen the quality and vibrancy of the arts curriculum; (3) partnerships are difficult, and require extensive planning and communicating; (4) to be effective, projects must address multiple aspects of a school's culture, and not simply overlay a new project on an existing status quo.  To that end, project designs and implementation plans were asked to address the following "five guiding principles":

- **Arts instruction as part of the core curriculum** should include skills-based arts instruction, study of aesthetics, and arts integration with core curricular areas

- **School change** should be supported through reforms such as new instructional practices, new uses of time, new uses of resources

- **Partnership and collaboration** should be built through extensive planning time, clear lines of communication, and shared visions and vocabularies

- **Professional development** should be provided to both teachers and teaching artists

- **Evaluation** should be done for both program and student learning

The program has never been seen as a "top down" initiative and it has not endorsed specific practices from other arts education efforts such as "multiple intelligences,"  "Regio Emilia graphic performance," or "the Writing Project" approaches.  There are those among the Arts Partnerships who do follow some of these approaches, but CAE does not determine them in advance. The local partnership may work toward enhancing teaching and learning in math or language arts, it may

emphasize the development of student talent in a particular art form, it might emphasize career development or awareness of arts related industries.  In practice, some of the partnerships have emphasized student art making, while others have focused on students as appreciators of or audiences for the arts.  As Barnett (1999:485) says of other education partnerships, "no two partnerships are identical."[1]

## Contextual Arts Education

In the beginning, CAE had described its approach to arts instruction as "Comprehensive Arts Education." Over five years, the program was intended to provide students with skills in the separate arts disciplines at all levels, with experience using arts processes across the general education curriculum, with experience in the forms of artistic expression used by many cultures other than their own, and with the capacity to develop aesthetic values and make their own aesthetic judgments.  This view of the curriculum, whether in or out of the social, educational, or spatial contexts of schools and classrooms, did not take social settings or situations into special account.  It did not look to the strengths of particular partnering cultural organizations, but rather to a set ideal.  To this point, CAE's conception of the kinds of arts programs they would support was not much different from conceptions of traditional curriculum arts programs

"Comprehensive arts education" is a term that has been used for several years in arts education. Organizationally, the term indicates that the component parts of such an instructional program are interdependent with each one being essential to realizing the goals of the others.  The term has also been used to indicate that arts instruction should be available to all students. Practitioners who try to implement "comprehensive" programs recognize that individual tailoring of instruction should be made according to the needs, abilities, and interests of the students and their parents.  CAE soon came to realize that the policy, resource, and structural constraints in post-1975 NYC schools necessitated far more time, space, and money to deliver than many schools had available.

CAE then modified its arts education approach to having local partnerships identify the needs, interests, and ability levels of students and match them to instruction in the arts.  This is a shift away from the more traditional "delivery mode" of instruction in which specific bodies of information, skills, and types of outcomes are defined outside the school to one that localizes the issues and employs different resources such as teaching artists and cultural organizations in the delivery of instruction.

## Partnerships

Joined with instruction in the arts in CAE's "theory of action" was an understanding of the power of partnership as a change strategy.  The theory holds that artists and cultural organizations in partnership with schools and educators can deliver valuable resources, activities, learning strate-

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[1] B. G. Barnett, et al. (1999). "A Typology of Partnerships for Promoting Innovation," Journal of School Leadership, 9, p. 485.

gies, and motivational forces and predicts that these partnerships will effect demonstrable changes in the structure of schools and the growth and achievement of participating students. Key to the theory is the observation that deep content knowledge and a passion for the content are key components of effective teaching in any domain. Teaching artists—practicing professional artists who also teach—have the content and the drive to inspire rich student learning experiences.

These complex collaborative partnerships comprised new contexts for arts education and school change by expanding leadership, resource delivery, structure and delivery of instruction, and new student performance indicators—engagement, performance, understanding, and aesthetic responses. As Salomon states:

People appear to think in conjunction or partnership with others and with the help of culturally provided tools and implements. Cognitions, it would seem, are not content-free tools that are brought to bear on this or that problem; rather they emerge in a situation tackled by teams of people and the tools available to them.[2]

## Research Design

Our work is influenced by studies of distributed and situated cognition and shifts much, though clearly not all, of the focus from the individual student as learner to the students in contexts. This shift is particularly important as we study the ways that the arts and the resources of the cultural partners are related to study in core curriculum areas. Our research is aimed at discovering how instruction and study in these new contexts contributes to student learning and performance, but we begin by laying the groundwork in deeper and more complete documentation of the contexts themselves. Our assumptions are that social, intellectual, structural, emotional, and cultural contexts influence students' learning and that we need to develop a more complete understanding of just what the contexts are as we proceed with our investigation of student learning.

*The idea of environment is a necessity to the idea of organism, and with the conception of environment comes the impossibility of considering psychical life as an individual, isolated thing developing in a vacuum.[3]*

Key questions addressed by the research team are:

1. How does the integration of the arts support school change efforts?

2. In what ways is the nature of arts learning qualitatively different when outside cultural resources partner with schools to design/deliver curriculum?

3. In what ways is school instruction and structure changed by the introduction of the arts and through the partnerships with cultural organizations?

[2] G. Solomon, ed. (1993), Distributed Cognitions. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. p. xiii.
[3] J. Dewey, (1884) "The New Psychology," Andover Review, 2, p. 285. G. Solomon, ed. (1993), Distributed Cognitions. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. p. xiii.

4. Do the arts provoke parent and community involvement in a school—and is this linked to school change?

5. What is the impact (and legacy) of sustained partnership efforts on local cultural organizations?

Up until now, our research design has included detailed surveys administered to every teacher, teaching artist, project coordinator, and cultural organization administrator involved in the project. We are also conducting extended interviews with a sample of principals. We are conducting multi-year classroom observations and interviews at eight selected partnerships, where we are attempting to gain deeper understanding of the issues at play in the projects, to help us better understand the survey data, and to give us portraits to draw upon, as in the four examples cited below. We will also look at some test data, and are tracking changes in resource allocations at the school sites.

The research and evaluation team spent the first three years mapping the evolution of the partnerships and the context (in schools, classrooms, and cultural organizations) for the development of the new curriculum units and instructional approaches. CAE's original design demanded that each partnership document student learning through the arts, and the evaluation team was intended to review and synthesize this documentation and evidence collected by the school sites. By the end of the second year, it became evident that the capacity to collect evidence and assess student learning did not reside at the local level. Furthermore, our mapping of the development of the partnerships had brought us to the point where we had to examine the impact of the programs on student lives and learning to continue to make meaning of our research.

In attempting to develop a strategy to determine the program impact we had to consider the broad range of programs, partnerships, and contexts, for each classroom. Following is a brief description of four programs that is intended to highlight the variety of contexts and conflicts that exists for our research.

## Variation of Partnership Programs

There is no end to the variation of the partnerships funded through CAE. The program is in 81 elementary, middle, and high schools. It is in schools of more than 3,000 and less than 200 students. It is in some Coalition of Essential Schools, as well as in more traditional schools; it is in Bellvue Hospital where it works with high school aged students with emotional, psychological, and criminal disorders. It is in some of the highest performing and some of the lowest performing schools throughout the five boroughs of New York City. The 135 cultural partners range from large, well-known ones like the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Ballet Theatre to small, semi-anonymous arts organizations consisting of three to five staff members. It includes cultural organizations that have education programs, and it includes educational organizations that work solely in the realm of the arts. Some of the organizations are very young, some are quite old. The arts disciplines being taught include, but are not limited to, visual arts, theatre, storytelling, poetry, music, opera, costume design, dance, musical theatre and architecture. The

arts programming takes the form of year-long art studios, 3- to 10-day arts residencies, one-shot arts performances, field trips, interdisciplinary projects, performance-based projects, and many more.  Professional development ranges from the weekly to the non-existent.

Perhaps the most salient variation among programs, and the one that has been pivotal in our design of the student impact study, is the range of goals that exist for the partnerships.  It should be noted, also, that one of the largest stumbling blocks we have found in the full development and implementation of these partnerships is the lack of shared goals, either among schools and cultural organizations, or among teachers and teaching artists, or among school administrators and teachers, or among various other constituencies.

Student-oriented program goals might include one or more of the following:

• Developing student arts skills

• Exposing students to the arts and/or arts organizations

• Enhancing student verbal literacy skills

• Enhancing student learning in non-arts domains

• Enhancing student communication and other social skills

• Encouraging student creativity and imagination through art making

Sometimes programmatic goals might be oriented toward the school, such as:

• Establishing relationships with the outside community

• Increasing parental involvement

• Improving the physical environment of the school

A given program might have one or more of any of these (or other) goals.  A given partner in the program (whether a practitioner or an organizational administrator) might or might not share the same goals.  At the same time, we have observed how serendipity and dissonance play a strong role in these richly layered programs, often opening new avenues of learning for students and instructors alike.   The unexpected benefits that accrue to students, in ways not foreseen by project designers or leaders, need to be documented and valued as outcomes as well.  It became clear to us that we would be shortchanging the work of the projects and the students if we applied one set of criteria for assessing program impact in these diverse and complex contexts.

For example, at one of the high schools there are six different year-long "arts studios" co-taught by a teacher and a teaching artist. This is one of the more intensive and sustained of the CAE arts programs—in terms of student contact hours with the arts, and also in terms of professional development for teachers and artists. Students are placed by grade level in a studio of their choice. Each week, throughout the year, students attend a 2-hour art studio class that is designed to

develop their arts skills in a given domain (acting, dance, visual arts, videography, design, poetry). At first glance, assessing the development of arts skills would seem to be the obvious approach for assessing project impact.

At this school, however, many of the students, particularly in the first two years of the program, were starting with very little exposure to and experience with the arts. Using objective high school level indicators for assessing the development of student arts skills would not necessarily be appropriate. Then there is the issue of arts integration. The project's initial goals of integrating the arts with non-arts areas have been altered to "linking" the arts to the non-arts. In theatre classes, for example, in the first year of the project, 9 th /10 th graders wrote and performed plays around the idea of imperialism, the theme for the Humanities curriculum for that year. In the second year of the project, the program was changed so that 10th graders read and performed plays from the WWII period, their focus in their Humanities courses, with a focus not on the play's content, but on the reading and performance of the play. The content links were thus made more oblique, but were intended to be mutually reinforcing. And in fact, in the theatre course where scenes from The Diary of Anne Frank were being rehearsed, a researcher observed the Humanities teacher discussing with students the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands when students began to consider the stage sets for scenes from the play. Disagreement about the size of the stage attic space led to discussions about how and why Jews were hidden in the homes of the Dutch. In the exchange, the teaching artist who had been leading the class faded into the background as the Humanities teacher led the discussion. After a while, when the students seemed satisfied with the conversation, the teaching artist took over again to move the rehearsal along.

While direct links to the curriculum have faded, it is also true that arts skills are not being developed sequentially, across grade levels, or even within a grade. Teaching artists have developed arts skills rubrics, but they are not seeking to move each student along a continuum of development. The overall program, which allows students to change studio arts class each year (or to stick with the same one) does not differentiate between novices and experienced, and is not structured for the sequential development of essential skills. Instead, the program is to a degree "product-oriented" (with a balancing emphasis on "process"), with periodic panels of outside practicing artists, coming in to provide critical feedback to student performances or exhibitions. Through this and other project components, the program has successfully connected a group of high schoolers to the NYC arts community. It has built local community support for the school, including funding alliances.

The accomplishment of which the project administration speaks most highly is the extent to which the arts programs have come to "matter" to the students in the school. "Students now see the arts as something that is their right," said one administrator. Teachers too are beginning to demand participation in the program, she reported. Art and "culture" have become a central feature in the whole school curriculum. Teachers are asking that the arts become part of their regular weekly planning meetings.

What does all this mean for assessing impact?  An objective assessment of arts skills alone may only prove successful for the more naturally talented students, given the lack of a sequential approach to learning.  An assessment of learning in non-arts areas, such as world history, would be difficult (and perhaps meaningless) to link to the arts.  But looking at the changes in how the students perceive and relate themselves to their community, and especially the cultural community, and to the arts as a cultural force in our society, is something worth examining in this situation.  How the school has changed through its new alliances with local community representatives is also interesting to examine. In this case, there has also been substantial change on the part of the cultural organization, which has come to understand the world of schools and classrooms in entirely new ways from what they reported at the beginning of the project.  Working with our theoretical framework of how context-rich partnership programs can change school culture, we are documenting the complex connections and relationships that have contributed to these changes described above.

At another school, an elementary school in a severely depressed and socially devastated part of Brooklyn, the principal brought the CAE partnership to the school to "give the children something beautiful in their lives."  She also wanted to use the arts to improve their verbal literacy skills.  There are three different arts partners in this school, working in three different disciplines: visual arts, theatre, and dance.  Over two years, we observed an arts-in-education organization that uses theater to develop social and communication skills, including conflict resolution, in the classroom.

In the first year of the project, the arts organization went into the classrooms with a "canned curriculum" (used in other schools and at other times) that unfolded over 8 class periods.  Led by two teaching artists, students improvised roles within the framework of a story that involved a community garden that would be torn down to make way for a community economic revitalization project.  The "story" was structured and expertly guided by the teaching artists so that students became emotionally invested in and enthusiastic for the garden, and later for the revitalization project.  But ultimately the students faced the conflict of having to sacrifice one for the other.  The teaching artists were extremely skilled in terms of drawing students in to the story, keeping them fully engaged, and getting them to voice opinions, reason aloud, resist peer pressure, and often reflect and change their opinions.  A special education teacher noted that one year after their work in her class, the students still remembered every detail of the story that they had engaged in.

In the second year of the project, the teaching artists wanted to connect the "story" more closely to the curriculum.  Working with the 5th grade they developed a story around the Boston Tea Party.  Students represented various townspeople gathered in a tavern.  They each had a name and a role (butcher, cobbler), a family, and a stake in the community.  A teaching artist entered the room and read the latest proclamation from the king to raise taxes yet again.  After her exit, the other teaching artist, in the role of publican, began to rile up the students in anti-royalist fervor.  The King's messenger appeared again and again over the next few classes with yet more taxes and vexations.  The townspeople felt the harsh injustice of the situation, and following the lead of the

teaching artist/publican ultimately decided to sneak down to the Boston harbor and dump the tea overboard.

The traditions of this arts organization are to use theatre to explore conflict resolution and to help students learn to find their own voice and resist peer pressure. Ultimately the teaching artists cast the story as a hot-headed leader rallying the colonists to a rash and dangerous act. (At several points the kids began to spontaneously pound their desk and chant "Dump the Tea! Dump the Tea! Burn the Ship! Burn the Ship! Kill the King! Kill the King!) The story line brought the colonists/students to the point where they had to either follow the leader to the harbor where they would dump the tea, and put their families at great risk (as was repeatedly stressed to them), or they had to heed caution and resist the mob mentality. At the moment of decision, over the babble of excited kids shouting out their positions—Dump the Tea! Sink the Ship! Kill the King!—the teaching artists told the students to choose a position on an imaginary line stretching across the room. One end represented commitment to dumping the tea, the other a refusal. At first every child moved to the Dump the Tea end of the line. As the teaching artists (in character) kept arguing with each other about the risks to the families of these rash colonists, children one by one began to break free and run down to the other side of the line, sometimes freezing in the middle unsure of what to do, sometimes having to literally wriggle out of the grasp of their peers. Ultimately every single child ran down to the other end. No tea would be dumped! Long live the King!

Did these teaching artists intend to teach that the "Rebellion," later the American Revolution, was hot-headed and perhaps foolish? That a more reflective population wouldn't have taken such steps? Is that what students walked away with? As an assessment, should student understanding of the decision to dump the tea be the test of the project success? Or the origins of the Revolution, which had only been presented from one narrow perspective?

Or should this project be assessed from the teaching artists' goals which were described as wanting to give these students—who had no other cultural connections with the time of the American colonists—who had never been to Williamsburg Virginia, and who hadn't seen the PBS program on the Adams family—a visual image and some sort of visceral connection with the time and place as something that really existed, so that when they studied the period, it had some resonance with their imagination and interest?

Or should this project be assessed on the basis of the observed extremely high levels of student engagement in the classroom? On the fact that special education students who the teacher claimed could not remember things from one day to the next, remembered minute details one year later? On the fact that students who were often disruptive and unengaged in class became focused and participatory? That students enjoyed themselves and felt positive about the class? Arts skills were not an explicit part of this class, but the teaching artists also wanted to convey a sense of character, sequence, and plot to the students. Is this what should be assessed?

At a third school, for emotionally disturbed students, some of whom had been incarcerated, a theatre organization provided twenty 90-minute sessions over 10 weeks using improvisational theatre techniques to enhance students reading of Antigone.  The residency was structured to first introduce basic theatre skills, mostly through theatre games, to the students.  They then had students do improvisations from folk tales selected by the arts organization.  Finally they worked with the students, who were reading Antigone, to develop improvisations which were later performed for a public (school community) audience.

The goals for the project were to enhance the literacy skills of the students, by getting them to read out loud, to read for understanding, and to make meaning of what they were reading.  Use of improvisation could demonstrate the meaning that students were making of the texts.

No formal assessment strategies were developed to determine if literacy skills per se were increased during this residency or school term.  However, teachers whom we interviewed reported that this group made sophisticated meaning of the reading in their improvisations.  They felt that the students took the performances very seriously and were successful in their efforts.  They also commented favorably on the trust the students had developed with the teaching artists, revealed in rapport and ease of interactions.  Further they indicated that attendance was highest on days when the teaching artists were present.

Teaching artists whom we interviewed viewed their lessons as successful when they could get all students engaged in the activities.  Many classes, they said, started with kids turning their chairs away from the group, so that their back faced their classmates.  This kind of behavior was not atypical in this school.  Early into the residencies, the teaching artists said, students modified their behavior to participate in the program.  When improvisations at first became loaded with student-actors solving dramatic disputes by killing off the characters, the teaching artists pointed out that by settling their characters disputes through murder, the students abruptly ending the drama, and their participation in it.  That the students soon moved away from this mode of acting, to ones that would allow for further exploration of character and plot was a sign to the teaching artists that the students were valuing what they were learning.

Again, the assessment issue: Literacy skills?  Communication skills?  Attendance?  Participation?  Cooperative behavior?

A last example.  At a high performing elementary school the principal brought the Arts Partnership program in to enhance instruction in music and physical education through percussive instruments in grades K-2 and dance in grades 3-5.  From the beginning the principal was adamant that the program would focus on sequential arts instruction and that it would not look to integrating with core curricular areas, where students were excelling.  Teachers and some parents initially had expressed misgivings about changing the successful school program in any way.

In the second year however, due in part to resistance on the part of the music and phys ed teachers, the program was changed to partner teaching artists with classroom teachers.  The classroom

teacher role was mainly to observe the arts instruction, and to gather several times in the year with the teaching artists for "reflection meetings." In time teachers and teaching artists moved these "reflection meetings" from discussion of logistical issues to discussion of the types of learning that they were seeing in individual students, thus beginning a bridge between the types of learning and performance that students might make in one setting or another. In the third year of the project, the principal decided that she wanted to have a way to talk to the parents about how the arts programs were enhancing student performance and learning in the broadest sense (for example in problem solving, transitions, group work). The arts organization was also looking to develop some research and evidence for their own program development and advocacy. The partners initiated, with the project evaluator, a student assessment project to work with two teachers and the two teaching artists to develop rubrics.

The development of the rubrics was done with extensive guidance and participation of the project evaluator. The four teachers and teaching artists made lists of their behavioral learning goals, such as the ones listed in the previous paragraph. The group selected overlapping goals, and then added goals specific to the arts skills being taught. The instructors now make extensive use of the data gathered through the rubrics, and have found its development and application a strong professional development practice, in that they have used it to systematically think about and look at student learning, and they are beginning to explore how their own questions about teaching and learning can begin to be answered through this collection of data.

This partnership presents an interesting case of a project starting off with a strict separation between the arts and non-arts, and moving to a place where in some general way they are looking at issues of transfer. Looking for the arts skills is happening as well, but it appears that the decision to use rubrics, and to do it collaboratively with teachers and teaching artists, was at least in part brought about by a need to communicate and advocate with parents and others about the place of the arts in the broader school environment.

In our own research studies we are not looking at issues of transfer, but this case illuminates well that showing how arts skills play out in non-arts domains may be another way of saying that what matters in the lives of students (such as gaining the ability to solve problems) happens in many places, and in many curricular areas, including the arts.

In many ways, we think that the lack of uniformity, or even coherence, that we find in some of the projects reflects how the program is swimming in uncharted waters. Because of the current emphasis on high stakes testing and Learning Standards—essentially, starting points and ending points—there is little capacity in the system for the middle part, that is for designing coherent curriculum units, and even less for assessing their usefulness and appropriateness at promoting student learning. We have observed that while teaching artists first shrinked from many of the benchmarks or guideposts of the education world, such as the NYS Learning Standards, they soon turned to them seeking guidance and validation, oftentimes whittling down their arts lessons so that they mechanically echoed the goals and outcomes outlined in these educational documents—

"Just teach one or two standards," we have heard many educational experts tell them. "Don't try to do too much." But three years later, some teaching artists report that they now leave the standards behind, confident that they are embedded in their work, and return to what they perceive as a richer world of art, experience, and learning. We are finding that these teaching artists are eager to be a part of our new student impact study which is designed to start where the program is, to develop and articulate clear learning goals, collect baseline student data around those goals, gather formative assessment while teaching the unit, and collect evidence of student learning that can be used summatively. We turn next to a description of this study.

## Current Research Strategies

The above four examples are just the tip of the iceberg, but they do convey a sense of the range and sometimes conflicted goals and outcomes of the partnerships. And we hope they convey a sense of the rich, stimulating, and sometimes unexpected experiences students are having through the project. In a great many of the classrooms that we have observed, we see students deeply engaged and motivated by the work. They appear interested, joyful, proud of their accomplishments; they are learning and their minds are processing new information and skills and thoughts and sometimes even worlds.

As Dewey said of instructional practices, "there is no one best way" to conduct research on complex issues. Part of our solution has been to choose to conduct our research as close to practitioners as possible, assuming that data gathered in this way will reflect the impact of practice and help us understand how the compromises required in practice affect the students' development. In this work, we attempt to observe the processes and actions of both instructors and students, as they work together, interact, or work independently, and to describe these complex actions and what they involve and how they evolve, with an eye to the characteristics that may be particular to or strongly enabled by the arts. Through these observations we are looking for patterns that might help us draw up illustrations of learning.

We recently received a two-year grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, with supplemental funding from the Center for Arts Education, to initiate a focused study with 10 teams of teachers and teaching artists, all of whom have had prior experience working together. CCT's involvement with early situated cognition research conducted by Roy Pea, Allan Collins, and James Greeno and our participation in design experiments projects with Collins and Hawkins provide an experience base and conceptual rationale for work in richly contextual programs. To appropriately encompass the contextual realities of school arts programs, a multi-disciplinary teams of evaluators, teachers and teaching artists will work together to refine the arts-integrated curriculum and fashion embedded baseline, formative, and summative assessments. Researchers will serve as coaches, extra hands and eyes to implement the assessment tools, and documenters and analysts of their work.

In this study we plan to document the curriculum development process, illuminate the choices made by the teams, analyze how specific arts domain strengths are drawn upon, document how student learning is monitored, and analyze connections between the curriculums developed and the New York State Arts Learning Standards. We will attempt to document complex actions as they occur in the classroom, and to look at them with the teaching artist and teacher to try to make meaning of them together, to identify patterns, or to illuminate unexpected events. The work has two phases. In the first part, which we have just started, researchers will conduct four classroom observations of each team to document:

- specific teaching approaches and attributes that are related to the arts (such as discussion of standards of quality, drawing upon personal experience, hands-on arts-making)

- specific student actions or behaviors that occur in the classroom related to the arts instruction (such as exhibition of inventiveness, experimentation, perseverance, personal expression, emotion)

- demonstrated levels of student engagement, ability to make connections between the arts lesson and other curricular or personal areas, and understanding of lesson content or goals.

In the second part, slated to occur over the next two academic years, researchers will meet with each teacher/teaching artist team to:

- work with the instructors to clarify and articulate their specific student learning goals for the arts lesson;

- work with the instructors to develop embedded assessment tools to formatively develop effective instruction and capture evidence of students meeting these learning goals;

- identify the Learning Standards implicit or explicit in the lessons.

Intrinsic to this effort will be an attempt to work with the teachers and teaching artists to encourage their awareness of their intentions, while continuing to encourage imaginative, flexible, and unique responses to what unfolds in the classroom. What do they want to teach and why? What is appropriate about their art form, or the non-art form in cases of integrated curriculum, that brings them together and makes those domains fruitful learning grounds? In answering both these questions, context is all. From that point, we intend to illuminate learning goals and work with them to develop tools for testing the effectiveness of the teaching approaches and of the outcomes. We will work with them to establish baseline student data, as well as formative feedback, and summative assessments, all around the particular goals and intentions that are relevant to the context of the particular partnership we are working with.

From this study, we hope to gain some solid examples of the power of the arts in promoting student learning along a variety of directions. We hope to be able to build capacity at a local level for building program. We hope to have some quantifiable student learning data that we can share with others. Finally, we hope to illuminate what teaching artists bring to the classroom that can

contribute to a school's educational goals for its students.  All of this data will be joined with our mapping of the development of the partnerships and arts curriculum units to develop a kind of a branching, looping path, with way points and guideposts, detailing the linking of cultural resources with schools to further and enrich the lives and learning of students.

**—New York, April 14, 2000**

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