ADVOCATING FOR ARTS IN EDUCATION:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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ADVOCATING FOR ARTS IN EDUCATION:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

A Project

by

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Department of Teacher Education
Abstract

of

ADVOCATING FOR ARTS IN EDUCATION:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

by

Kristi Morales-Scott

This project is an Alternative Culminating Experience for a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction with an Elective Emphasis in Arts in Education. This Project follows Pathway V: Art Educator as Advocate and Leader.

The researcher established a meaningful connection of events and revealed, in narrative form, the following: how the researcher evolved as both an artist and an educator; how those collective experiences provided abundant opportunities to advocate for the arts; what emerged from the researcher’s field work with respect to pursuing and preparing for a leadership role within arts education; and an explanation of why there is a urgent need for more advocates committed to reforming the environments of our children.

Literature reviewed addressed theories of artistic alternative strategies for non art-based public classrooms, how their application addresses the need for diversity in teaching practices, influences societal conditions, and memoirs written by others who strive for social change.
The qualitative research was collected utilizing the methodology of narrative research and included the artifacts and activities of autobiographical writing, journal writing, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, documents (traditional and electronic), photographs, and teacher accounts.

After reviewing literature and qualitative data, the researcher concluded that she was able to advocate for the arts in a myriad of scenarios and felt she was able to help children and families as a result of her research.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Karen D. Benson, Ph.D.

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

As I prepare for and become immersed in my research, I have begun to carefully examine some of the reasons certain people have entered my life. I am starting to believe that human beings who do not express themselves in any artistic form for various reasons are some of the population that end up in our juvenile and adult correctional facilities, dependent on alcohol or drugs, or continuing to engage in numerous other self-destructive and anti-social behaviors. I imagine those who live with such proclivities can tangibly feel through their sub-conscious an internal restlessness of their crude artistic seed and its potential to flourish. Yet, in absence of the sun of exposure and the water of expression, they feel compelled to seek equally powerful coping mechanisms to quiet its existence. The intensity I suppose would depend on the intensity of their individual aptitudes. Sadly, many people, and children in particular, remain disconnected from and sometimes permanently alter their magical possibilities.

I write with vigor and energy excited to plant myself deep into the soil of self-discovery so I can somehow reach those who have not yet been given the opportunity to rearrange, deconstruct, rebuild, experience, or explore “the arts.” I’d like to believe that I could be responsible for cultivating some of those dormant artistic seeds and unleash bountiful harvests of artistic expression.

I will continue to work toward a world full of happy and excited children eager to attend schools rich with an artistic and kinesthetic curriculum, taught by passionate, energetic teachers. I envision vibrant children densely populating the earth as a carnival
of colorful, creative, and productive adults who pass on the beauty and integrity of the aesthetic to future generations. It is for my own young son, the ethereal children I have yet to meet in my classroom, and any other future self expressionists to cross my path that I dedicate this period of time.

Thank you to Professors Karen Benson, Crystal Olson, and Lorie Hammond for graciously leading me through one of the most gratifying experiences of my life. Their efforts are deeply appreciated. I’d also like to thank my family for their continued support.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This culminating project established a meaningful connection of events and revealed, in narrative form, the following: how the researcher evolved as both an artist and an educator; how those collective experiences provided abundant opportunities to advocate for the arts; what emerged from the researcher’s field work with respect to pursuing and preparing for a leadership role within art education; and an explanation of why there is a urgent need for more advocates committed to the reformation of the environments of our children.

Rationale

The following definitions can be found in the Encarta Dictionary for the term “Advocate”: somebody who supports or speaks in favor of something; a tireless advocate of social reform. The term “leader” from the same reference is defined as somebody whom others will follow; somebody who guides and directs.

Today, the fast-paced society encourages a constant drive for success and escalating expectations. Contemporary children live in homes where parents are faced with insurmountable demands balancing their roles personally and professionally. For some families, the present state of the economy is causing aggravating factors of hunger and homelessness. To complicate matters, children are immersed in an aggressive education environment that demands academic achievement from performance based standards. These children are the unintended victims of the pressure cookers that contemporary
society has created. As a result, society is facing many more obstacles pertaining to human behavior.

Many government assets are spent on providing accommodations to address behavioral, academic, and motivational issues of students. Some include alternative educational settings, special education resources, and human capital. However, if such assets were re-directed toward an artistic, integrated curriculum within schools, the need for many interventions would decline.

Presently, most students at all performance levels are enduring the antithesis of an arts based classroom. Traditional settings and a standards based curriculum often stifle movement and creativity and overlook any form of artistic inclination. If all students were offered an opportunity to learn in a dynamic and kinesthetic fashion, children would be afforded an education rich with relevant experience. Perhaps this would also extend to children the opportunity to learn of their strengths at an earlier age. School would be a fun place to be and could positively offset to some degree any negating circumstances within the home or community. The arts would allow for cultivation of all students’ imaginations, unfasten stigmas, or perhaps omit the need for medications. Those who fall outside of mainstream learner parameters would benefit the most, as the arts would decrease the risk of developing anti-social behaviors.

After a concentrated exploration of her origins, influences, and proclivities, the researcher concluded that through the development of self, she found many opportunities to take action on behalf of the arts. She explored how the relationships among people and
events, most notably, becoming a mother, profoundly impacted her constant drive to do better for herself, for children, and for humanity.

Context

This study consisted of descriptive facts, events, or situations which occurred both currently and historically within the context of the researcher’s personal experiences. Much of the content, including the location of mentioned professionals, took place within the state of Florida and the city of Sacramento, California. The study measured events that took place from approximately 1980 to the present.

Through the duration of the narrative inquiry, the researcher was 36 and 37 years of age. She had been married for 10 years and was a mother of one eight year old boy. At the time of the study, her son attended third grade in a public school. The researcher graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor’s of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, FL. She was employed full time as a graphic designer with the Federal Government in Sacramento and had taught Graphic Design part time to “At-Risk” students within the Sacramento County Office of Education.

Subjects mentioned in the study represented varying socioeconomic backgrounds that ranged from homelessness to the upper middle class. Their ages ranged from six to sixty-five. The subjects also characterized varying academic abilities including, “At-Risk”, Special Education, foster youth, and traditional learners.

Parents mentioned within the context of this study represented a varying degree of socio-economic backgrounds; many signified that of middle-class. Professionals and
community members represented varying degrees of expertise and hierarchy within society.

To a large extent, this interpretive process and gathering of field documentation originated from the researcher’s efforts to find an engaging learning environment for her son and from providing and participating in aesthetic experiences.

Procedures, Methods, and Goals

To begin this study, the researcher developed a horizontal timeline recounting significant events that documented her growth as a human being, mother, artist, and educator. A journal was also created to record experiences significant to the evolution of her inclination toward the arts and teacher education. The journal also included events that aroused analytic considerations to advocate for the arts.

Much of the qualitative research consisted of the following: autobiographical writing, journal writing, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, documents (traditional and electronic), photographs, and teacher accounts.

The researcher identified several goals within the context of the study. The first was to gain a deeper understanding for and make meaning of her prior experiences as they pertained to art and education. Secondly, the researcher felt it was important to employ every opportunity to exhibit leadership and advocacy for artistic integration not only within education, but also, into the fabric of the personal and professional lifestyles. Last, she felt the most important goal was to educate parents and community members who could in turn be motivated enough to contact key personnel and express concerns over the lack of an arts integrated curriculum.
Literature Review

In addition to the case studies mentioned above, a variety of literary sources were used to gather supportive documentation. The investigation began by studying the theories of artistic, alternative strategies available for non art-based public classrooms and how their application addresses the need for diversity in teaching practices. Theorists in this area included: Elliot Eisner (1974, 2002), John Dewey (1934), Howard Gardner (2006). The researcher also felt it was necessary to explore material written about influential societal conditions, and memoirs written by others who strive for social change, and characteristics of teachers who have been successful in the classroom.

Future in Teaching

At the time of the study the researcher had limited teaching experience. However, as a result of her culmination, she felt she was well suited for her anticipated career as a potential educator, and she embodied a unique set of skills. These skills included maintaining an awareness in a classroom and creating a meaningful curriculum. The author understands how important it is for children to make learning fun. In addition, as a mother of a child with special aptitudes, she was mindfully aware of the philosophy that all children learn in different ways, have different strengths, and can actively participate in an inspiring environment. While the researcher was anxious to spend more time in the classroom, she also felt she would at some point strive to attain a leadership role within education. After careful consideration of many schools for her son, it was apparent the schools needed more professionals who could make an arts based curriculum in a caring environment possible for all children.
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

*At Risk* refers to describe at risk students who are under-performing academically for one or more of the following reasons: academically disadvantaged; disabled; or lower socioeconomic status.

*Special Education* refers to instruction that is modified for students with mental health issues, physical or developmental disabilities, or giftedness.

*Kinesthetic Learning* describes a physical style of learning, using touch, action, movement and hands-on work within learning activities.

Limitations

The researcher found limitations within the scope of the project. It was noted that while she was able to seek and create opportunities for advocacy, she felt it would prove more beneficial to be intimately involved in a district working in a classroom full time. She felt perhaps it would lead to opportunities on a larger scale.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review examined the effects of introducing alternatives to traditional educational theories and practices in the classroom. Part I summarizes research supporting the benefits of implementing pedagogy that incorporates the arts. Part II analyzes how the arts possess the capability to reduce or mitigate distress and anti-social behavior. Last, part III explored how building healthy classroom relationships allowed for students to become better equipped both academically and socially.

Part I

Alternative educational models and theories to current mainstream practices exist. All of these derive from a body of research supporting the benefits of an art-based curriculum. Thus far, only a modest impact incorporating these alternatives within public school systems has been seen. The political devotion to standardized testing and its mechanical influence in today’s classrooms demonstrates an immediate need for the renovation of processes and curriculum. Consequently, it seems necessary to establish opportunities for the educators themselves to become familiar with these methodologies so they can be introduced to students. To initiate a transformation of education for children and the collective community, an examination of the following are necessary: origination of contemporary curriculum and an explanation of the ideal, how diversity in the classroom is not limited to multi-culturism, how pedagogical alternatives could enhance, replace, or augment current practices, and the benefits that would result from
changing the derivatives of curriculum and implementing artistic pedagogy in our classrooms.

Herbert Kliebard’s (1992) “The Struggle for the American Curriculum,” explored the forces that shaped the American curriculum. Its history emerged from several influential philosophies in the latter part of the 19th century. Four major interest groups, including; humanists, developmentalists, social efficiency educators, and social meliorists all competed for dominance. The humanistic curriculum was grounded in the psychological theory that individual capabilities such as reason, sensitivity to beauty, and high moral character were to guide students toward a humanistic ideal. The developmentalists assumed the natural order of a child’s development was the most significant entity by which to determine what should be taught. The social efficiency philosophy derived from firsthand knowledge and observation of the education system during the industrial revolution by pediatrician Joseph Mayer-Rice.

Rice became quite critical of the education system as a whole. As a result, he called for stricter governance and rallied for student achievement to be measured by standards. Last, the social meliorists understood curriculum as a vehicle for social change. The curricula today does not consist of one overpowering philosophy that was able to contend its way to dominance, but rather it has evolved into a myriad of ideas drawing from each of these academic beliefs (Kliebard, 1992).

Curriculum by definition, according to Donald Arnstine (1967), is “the knowledge and skills included in a school program” (p. 339). While it was the intention of all interested parties above to create an infallible standard, today it is understood that
curriculum must start moving in an evolutionary manner toward an ideal that is more suitable for its intended audience. Those directly involved in the decision making about what is taught in our public schools do so based solely on factors such as politics, economic conditions, societal influence, traditions, etc. The end results are children being forced to learn, through whatever means, about concepts that are not meaningful to them. Therefore, much of it is memorized retained, tested, and forgotten. Many hours of hard work from the administration, teachers, and students is wasted on material that is, figuratively, chewed and regurgitated.

Elliot Eisner, in *The Kind of Schools We Need* emphasized the importance of a well-crafted curriculum (1998). The school environment, he stated, should foster children’s strengths and allow for exploration toward their special aptitudes or bliss (p.16). Arnstine (1967) suggested that if students are not in the process of acquiring dispositions, or rather, gaining a natural motivation toward what they are learning, then nothing they are exposed to will be acquired in a meaningful sense. Perhaps one of the most important dispositions a school can contribute to an individual’s development is the inclination to continue to learn throughout his or her life. Arnstine (1967) further explained that students can only acquire new interests or meanings when changes in their character are made through an artistic or educational experience that is esthetically stimulating and not mechanical in nature. Fundamentally, John Dewey outlined the basics of such experiences in his book *Art as Experience* (1934). He explained when a student is most alive and most observant of the world; he is undergoing an esthetic experience. This allows for a heightened vitality and ideal learning conditions (Dewey, 1934). Excitement
about subject matter, Dewey stated “goes deep and stirs up attitudes and meanings
derived from prior experience” (p. 68). Pupils engaged in esthetic experience, who are
free to explore what is meaningful to them individually, will incorporate necessary
dispositions to sustain a love of learning. A summation of the ideal curricula and
pedagogy is best described by Dewey (1934) who stated “Learning is a passionate affair,
involving how you feel and what you want with the world you are encountering” (p.
210).

Currently, policy makers are falling short of creating an ideal curriculum that fosters
the transformation of student dispositions. Arnstine (1967) clearly stated that the most
important determinant of a successful school is the ability for the teachers to choose
curriculum based on their own areas of competency and experiences. That is, if a teacher
lacked any skills or enthusiasm pertaining to the prescription of curriculum mandated by
others not intimately involved in its presentation, a poor education resulted (Arnstine,
1967). Arnstine also emphasized that a teacher must have individualized expectations for
each student, as each one differs in prior experiences (1967). While the term “teacher” is
not specifically mentioned with regard to Dewey’s works (1934), his “esthetic artist” and
“live creature” principles related perfectly to Arnstine’s illustration of a competent
teacher. In the foundation of Dewey’s beliefs (1934), he contended that an artist not
remain a cold spectator, but rather, an individual with attentive eyes, zest, and enjoyment
as he looks and listens. Moreover, if success is to be achieved and appropriate student
dispositions acquired, the teacher (artist) would select curriculum, inhabit this appropriate
knowledge and that of their students, and teach with excitement what is inherently inspirational to them.

The term diversity in the classroom is used to refer to its ideology of racial, cultural and ethnic demographics. Through the work of progressive educational theorists, the term provokes new meanings that must be considered. First, while a child’s background and prior experiences are important, they are overshadowed the importance of the diverse ways children can learn and their aptitude to incorporate diverse forms of literacy. As a society changes and as technology advances, so do its children. Perhaps the education system founded in the late 19th century is no longer applicable. Perhaps children being labeled with psychiatric/social disorders are physically and mentally unable to conform to an institution that is not advancing with the culture in which they live. According to Lucy Jo Palladino, author of *The Edison Trait*, many of these children are extremely bright, have extremely acute sensory systems, and excel at thinking divergently, with one idea on the heels of the next. However, school routines are likely to reward convergent thinking, which seeks to focus on one idea at a time (Palladino, 1997). Teachers can get frustrated by a child's apparent distractibility and lack of focus, but a mismatch between curriculum and pedagogy and a child’s innate learning style can mask the child's considerable gifts for creativity and independent thinking. If diverse curricula infused with art and diverse practices were administered in public schools, it seems plausible many of these at risk students would have an environment in which to thrive without the humiliation of labels or dangerous medications. When referring to differences among children’s cognitive strengths and abilities, Eisner (1998) stated, “Educational equity is
provided to the young not simply by giving them access to our schools, but by providing programs that enable them to become what they have the potential to be once they pass through the school house door” (p.18). He goes on to say, “Indeed, I would argue that the genuinely good school increases individual differences, it does not diminish them” (p. 18). In a genuinely good school, children’s diverse idiosyncrasies would be celebrated and cultivated rather than condemned and criticized.

Eisner (1998) outlined in detail several other key issues relating diversity as it relates to multiple forms of literacy. Specifically, he explained a child’s capacity to develop these forms through their sensory systems and the importance of acquiring these sensibilities. In addition to the traditional ways of communicating through reading and writing, said Eisner (1998), there are a variety of other ways in which humans can represent form

Literacy is far more than being able to read or write. Such conceptions are educationally anemic and shortchange children in the long run. The development of human sensibility and the provision of programs that address the several ways in which experience has been represented-propositional, literary, poetic, visual, auditory, choreographic-ought to be fundamental educational aims. (1998, p.16)

He believed that if students are allowed to refine these sensibilities, different types of knowing are possible. As their sensorial skills develop, their perceptions become more acute. They would then be able to decipher more complex qualities within their environment than if they were exposed exclusively to written and expressive language. While two dimensional constructions of literal meanings are building blocks in making
distinctions, an emphasis in schools must also be placed on the three dimensional modes of cognitive skills such as metaphor, ambiguity, and connotation. Being able to think in these forms allows for a diverse catalog from which to draw, when faced with real world challenges that require the consideration of multiple solutions.

A number of influential educators have experienced some success establishing the arts within the forum of education. Some have even managed to incorporate their philosophies into contemporary classrooms. To name a few that have achieved some advancement are Carl Orff, Mary Helen Richards, and Rudolf Steiner.

According to the American Orff Schulwerk Association, Orff Schulwerk is a way to teach and learn music. Its philosophy evolved from composer Carl Orff in Germany in the 1920’s. It is based on the idea that children enjoy clapping, dancing, keeping a beat, and creating music first, and reading and writing come later. Children compose music in a non-competitive way, incorporating poems, rhymes, games, songs, and dances. The four main tenets of the Orff pedagogy are first, exploration, or discovery of possibilities in sound and movement, second, imitation, to develop basic skills in rhythmic speech and body percussion, third, improvisation, where each individual can initiate new patterns or combinations based on ability, and last, creation, combining material from all previous phases into an original piece. The Orff pedagogical design appeals to schools and teachers who seek to address the needs of individuals and particular classes and settings. At present, more than 10,000 teachers in America consider Orff Schulwerk the ideal way to present the magic of music to their students (American Orff-Schulwerk Association, 2008).
Mary Helen Richards was the founder of another exciting music education philosophy called ETM, or Education Through Music. According to The Richards Institute of Education, Richards’ ideas were new and unusual in American education and based on the music education philosophy of Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodaly. ETM’s basic premise is derived from Kodaly’s perspective that music fosters development and literacy. Richards was instrumental in developing the artful teaching process of learning through song and play. ETM activities cultivate the imagination through the synergy of language, song, movement, and interactive play all the while, laying the foundation for the building of intelligence. Through the powerful cognitive benefits of ETM’s practices, educators have seen significant changes in student attitudes, achievement, and self-control. The Richard’s Institute states that a growing number of studies of ETM materials and practices are beginning to confirm empirical evidence of its effectiveness in the areas of communication, reading, child self-efficacy, and stabilization of at-risk populations. ETM continues to captivate the attention of music educators, classroom teachers, special education teachers, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, pediatricians, neuroscientists, and parents.

Waldorf education, also known as Steiner-Waldorf education, is a pedagogy based upon the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. The Association of Waldorf Schools in North America (2008) explained that Steiner believed learning was to be interdisciplinary, practical, artistic, intellectual, and be coordinated with "natural rhythms of everyday life. The Waldorf approach emphasizes the role of the imagination in
learning and the development of analytical and creative thinking. The overarching goal of Waldorf education is described as providing young people the opportunity to fulfill their own unique destiny. Schools and teachers are also given considerable freedom to define and modify their own curriculum. The structure of the Waldorf pedagogical model of child development divides childhood into seven-year developmental stages, each with its own learning requirements. In the elementary years, learning is regarded as purely artistic and imaginative. In this developmental stage, the approach emphasizes the need for children to experience life and develop their imagination. In the adolescent years, the emphasis shifts to developing the capacity for abstract thought, ethical thinking, and social responsibilities.

The Association has proudly professed that the approach has been termed "the most complete articulation of an evolutionary developmental K-12 curriculum and creative teaching methodology." Currently, the Association also notes, there are approximately 1000 independent Waldorf schools and 1400 independent Waldorf kindergartens located in approximately sixty countries throughout the world. There are also Waldorf-based public and charter schools, homeschooling environments, and schools for special education also exist. Waldorf methods have been adopted by numerous educators teaching in other state and private schools.

Thus far, an examination of the theory of curriculum, the diverse potential that exists within classrooms, and alternative practices has been made. Collectively, what has been explored supports the critical need to implement the arts into pedagogical practices for the benefit of the student and the collective community. John Dewey (1934) has stated
that when a student is most alive, and most observant of the world, he is undergoing an esthetic experience and is charged with heightened vitality. Eisner (1998) devoted much of his book to addressing how the arts are the most important vehicle for celebrating individual thinking, and more importantly the refining of sensibilities to be able to perceive and experience art. He also outlined how the arts in addition to bringing pleasure while being engaged in its creation, are mind-expanding, teach flexibility, and offer rich experiences in lessons. Artistic development broadens critical thinking skills. Furthermore, without exposure to the arts, children are robbed of what they can become.

In the article “The Arts Contribution to Adolescent Learning,” Professor Read M. Diket discussed how students approach learning more seriously when she made the arts part of the core curriculum. Her international mix of middle school students became more engaged, faithful, and productive after her incorporation of the arts. Diket made clear that the “No Child Left Behind” legislation’s emphasis on standards and testing work counter to arts education in schools, but it can work positively if “teachers in other subject areas recognize the value of artistic understandings and seek to incorporate the arts into classroom learning plans” (p. 174). Participation in the arts Professor Diket explained: offer the most compelling and accessible representations of what people desire, revere, and reject. If young people cannot interpret meaning directly from cultural forms and communicate using symbolic systems provided by the arts, the often cannot think beyond what others have already codified for them. (2003, p.175)

The Visual Arts Consortium’s secondary study, led by Professor Diket, showed that eighth graders active engagement with the arts in school significantly impacted their
achievement scores. For high school students, the study indicated a strong correlation between the arts and higher SAT scores (Diket, 2003).

Eisner (1998) outlined four important outcomes of the arts in academic achievement. First, an understanding of the content and form art takes on and the culture and time it was created; second, art education should refine student’s awareness of the aesthetic qualities in live; third, students should acquire a feel for what it means to transform ideas, images, and feelings into art form; and last, students dispositions include a willingness to imagine possibilities and cope with abstract and ambiguity. All four, according to Eisner, re-integrate the mind and body by refining the sensorial responses to the qualitative environment. In turn, these responses allow children to express what their words cannot reveal and provide a basis for what humans are capable of creating and expressing (Eisner, 1998). If cookie cutter and assembly line models continue to be utilized in classrooms, it will be cookie cutter minds that will continue to be produced. If educators, like the early founders of curriculum, continue to aim at achieving a utopian society, arts in education is the means by which to arrive.

In summary, Eisner (1998) wrote “Minds are made by what they are given the opportunity to learn” (p. 42). The aesthetic, the artistic, and the “experiences” are ripe fruit waiting for hungry parents, teachers, politicians, and policy makers to consume. Innovative philosophical educators have crafted an instructional menu that is now available to teachers. Progression is taking place with students in this country and abroad. Progressive kids need a progressive education, and an arts-based curriculum is essential to this educational reform. The work can begin when teachers are allowed to become
exposed to artistic pedagogical tools and systems, become architects of the curriculum, and celebrate the pleasure of helping their students discover what is valuable to them. Art is such a powerful word, and its purposes in culture are numerous. But in education, its function seems much more vital to society. The arts are the solution to developing multiple forms of literacy, a remedy for arousing students’ interests, a therapy for children who come from disadvantageous homes, a resolve for parents sending their unmotivated children to school, a medicine for inattentiveness and hyperactivity, a cure for lack of focus, the key to generations of kids becoming adept to the world around them, and the answer to the antiquated curriculum and practices in our schools.

**Part II**

“Art heals by activating the medicines of the imagination” (McNiff, 2004, p.2). According to folk wisdom, those who suffer wounds to the soul generate metaphoric angels that swarm the wound and offer remedy to the malady. It may manifest in many forms such as a peer offering support, listening to the inner voice, or, an artistic expression that suggests another way of imagining life. There are many adversities well rooted in society that young people face today, and while it is sufficient to say that artistic expression cannot alone transform a wounded soul, activating the medicines of the creative imagination should not be under-estimated. The following literature review will explore the environmental and institutional “daggers” that inflict such wounds on children and how the arts offer restorative possibilities for distress and anti-social behavior (McNiff, 2004, p. 112).
Author Michael Gurian of *Nurture the Nature* (2007) introduced the concept of a “social trend parenting system” and explained that it had evolved from conclusive and disturbing evidence of ongoing chronic distress and social pressures within the American family. Gurian stressed that this trend had greatly and negatively influenced parental decision making (2007). Gurian discussed how at the root of the parenting trend was the media and pop-culture that had too often successfully promoted the latest parenting fads, televised expert opinions, and saturated magazine articles, thus preventing parents from listening to their own instincts. Instead, parents conceded to the media trends that advocated for them to make their children fit into preconceived molds and prescribed criteria (2007).

One of the most offensive examples was hyper-preparing children from a young age to excel in rigorous academic settings in an effort to one day achieve the highest paying occupation (Gurian, 2007). Unfortunately, many children who have innate and natural gifts other than traditional academic subjects such as math, science, and language, fall outside this paradigm. Gurian (2007) believed that our children come into the world hardwired with a unique set of assets and liabilities unique to them that serve as the basis for their individual paths to success. Therefore, he felt all children’s unique abilities in various settings should be closely monitored, noted, and cultivated by any who would be in a position to do so (2007).

However, the social trend parenting system again conditioned parents to obey unproven ideas about how to help children succeed, including how children should look, behave, play, and achieve (Gurian, 2007). Often, this system contradicted the natural
inclinations of the individual child (p.33). Gurian stated that families who prescribe to such trends often find themselves dealing with anxiety and chronic stress (2007, p.35).

“We cannot just ‘construct’ a perfect human being. Young people must also ‘sprout.’ We must plant and wait, and we must have faith” (Gurian, 2004, p.37).

Within the confines of this trend, many children were not afforded the opportunity to experience the natural development processes that called for play, exploration, self discovery, refining of the senses, and building the imagination. Elliot Eisner, author of *Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), emphasized the importance of the biological aspect of the human sensory system with regard to developing a child’s imagination (p. 2). He explained that the sense organs are extremities from the center of the brain, and that these organs were the means through which the qualitative environment was experienced (2002, p.2). In Howard Gardner’s work *Art Education and Human Development* (1990), he also stated that studies document how a child’s sensory and perceptual powers develop very rapidly in early childhood (p.11). Eisner also explained that imagination, if fed by the sensorial attributes of touch, smell, sight, and sound, provided a source of satisfaction, and exploratory delight (2002, p. 5). Both Eisner and Gardner felt that satisfaction and exploration were two powerful positive concepts in the life of a child, and parents and educators had the opportunity to sustain such biological inclinations rather than strip them away by competitively pushing them toward serious academic schooling. With this in mind, both influential educators believed involvement in the arts in all settings could play a significant role in refining the sensory system, cultivating imaginative capabilities, and acting as a preventative measure to familial stress and anti-social behavior.
In the book *Art Heals*, Shaun McNiff (2007) explained that healing through art is one of the oldest cultural practices in every region of the world. He thought it was curious that sometimes art was dismissed by contemporaries to be a “New Age” practice. He went on to say that the way art heals within daily life was similar to therapeutic practices used with chronically ill patients in early psychiatric hospitals (2007). He referred to art as the “medicine” which flowed through every life situation. Art adapted to every conceivable problem and extended its insightful and transformative powers to any soul in need as a resourceful healer (2007, p.5).

While it is normal for children to experience a certain amount of positive stress related to new situations, learning a new skill, or adapting to complex surroundings, it is not healthy for children to experience negative stress. In Gurian’s work (2007) he also mentioned that negative stress caused the following symptoms affecting children physically, emotionally, and relationally (p.24). Physical symptoms included sleep disturbance, fatigue, and headaches (p. 24). Emotional symptoms included anxiety, depression, moodiness, and hyperactivity (p. 25). Relational symptoms could include anti-social behavior, such as argumentative, short-tempered, peer conflict, isolation, aggressiveness, and feelings of inadequacy (p. 25). Most disturbing was that chronic stress raised cortisol levels (stress hormone) and could “rewire” the natural brain chemistry that contained colorful unique attributes specific to each child (p.25).

Coinciding with the list of dangerous systems, Gurian (2007) argued that present day general child health statistics must give pause. Over four million boys in the United States used Ritalin or other mind-altering drugs (p. 30). Increasingly, more children
exhibited anti-social behavior. Children diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder numbered in the millions (2007, p. 30). A Carnegie Mellon survey noted that the standard responses to this nature had not been to rethink how children were raised, but rather expand punishment and incarceration (Gurian, 2007). A Department of Justice study reported that at the present rate of incarceration, one in twenty babies born in the United States will spend some part of their lives incarcerated (2007, p.30 ). As of 2004, one in every 138 U.S. residents were in prison (2007, p. 30). Millions of U.S. children abused substances seeking emotional relief and escape from pressure, rather than seek healthy human contact and healthy personal growth (2007, p. 31). In total, one third of children in the United States are diagnosed with some sort of mental or physical disorder (2007, p.31).

Luckily, according to Gurian (2007), if parents refocused on the core nature of the individual child’s temperament and trusted what they felt was essential for their own child, the child would become able to adapt to obstacles and flourish in any future circumstance. Likewise he stated, “If we pay attention to the nature of children, they will succeed!” (p.39). Parents, he continued, should operate with a central belief that their children were not a blank slate who needed them to fill it in, but rather their children required their efforts be geared toward their individuality and cultivation of their imagination (2007). This would render the social trends system unnecessary and relieve this source of familial stress (Gurian, 2007). McNiff (2004) stated “Ideally, the practice of creativity brings an expansion and sharpening of perception that improves the quality of a person’s interactions with others and the surrounding environment” (p. 288).
Two of the world’s most influential art educators Viktor Lowenfeld and Sir Herbert Read were affected by the conditions in Germany during the war (Eisner, 2004, p. 32). They felt, in part, the influences from the war resulted in an educational system that suppressed the natural human urge to express themselves creatively. As a result, that urge found an outlet in aggressive and repressive tendencies (Eisner, 2004, p.32). For Lowenfeld, creative expression not only had familial and educational benefits to offer, but a therapeutic one as well:

The child who uses creative activity as an emotional outlet will gain freedom and flexibility as a result of the release of unnecessary tensions. However, the child who feels frustrated develops inhibitions and, as a result, will feel restricted in his personality. The child who has developed freedom and flexibility in his expression will be able to face new situations without difficulties. The inhibited and restricted child, accustomed to imitating rather than expressing himself creatively, will prefer to go along set patterns in life. He will not be able to adjust to new situations quickly but will rather lean upon others as the easiest way out. Since it is generally accepted that progress, success, and happiness in life depend greatly upon the ability to adjust to new situations, the importance of art for personality growth and development can easily be recognized. (Eisner, 2004, p.32)

The following Gurian (2007) quote supported these ideas, “kids did better in school, acted out less at home, and felt better when parents nurtured their nature rather than superimpose trendy expectations on them” (2007, p. 32).
An important underlying principle is that the arts provide an avenue for children to be successful when otherwise they would not be in conventional areas. Art is nature’s muse for cultivating the imagination. Jessica Hoffman Davis, a cognitive developmental psychologist and founder of Arts in Education Program at Harvard School of Education, offered another unique perspective. She proposed in *Why Our Schools Need the Arts* (2008), that an equally compelling reason for integrating art into a child’s life was to provide an opportunity for failure to children who excelled in other areas. Children could also become quite savvy at tests and measurements, yet when faced with failing to make a high mark in something unfamiliar, felt stress from the opposite direction (Hoffman, 2008). As Eisner and Gardner stated earlier, making sense of art and self expression was demanding and required making use of sensibilities and skills that were not related to performance or measurable standards. Encountering success is vital to a child’s self esteem, says Hoffman, but equally important was for them to make sense of failure and explore messy uncertain realities that existed in their everyday life (2008).

McNiff (2004) provided related insight. He explained that when people were able to soften their grip on control, essential creative movement and energy found its way to natural and unexpected outcomes. This skill was an invaluable learning tool for children (2004). He went on to say that conflicts between freedom and regulation exist in every human being which in turn creates a dynamic tension (2004). However, within the confines of institutions, schedules, and media messages, this tension is heavily skewed toward regulatory and anti-creative separation. Thus, there was a need to encourage freedom and allow interplay among different forms of expression (McNiff, 2004, p. 148).
In the book *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006), author Elizabeth Gilbert wrote of her autobiographical travels through Italy, India, and, finally, Indonesia where she sought advice from Ketut, a Balinese medicine who enlightened the reader with a similar outlook on the cultivation of human behavior. The author was curious of Ketut’s explanation as to why there was so much lunacy and pain in the world to which he replied “humans are born with the equivalent potential for both contraction and expansion” (2006). He went on to explain that the ingredients of both darkness and light were equally present in everyone and that it was up to the individual, family, or society to decide what will be brought forth, the virtues or the malevolence (Gilbert, 2006). He further explained that the madness of the planet was largely the result of the human being’s difficulty in achieving balance (2006).

The Balinese medicine man told her in broken English of a tool many Balinese used to find peace and balance within themselves. He taught her the “Four Brothers Meditation” (2006). Balinese people believed babies are accompanied at birth by four invisible brothers that protected them throughout their lives. Their children were taught from an early age that the brothers can be called upon anytime for rescue and assistance. The brothers, he said, inhabit the four virtues a person needs to be safe and happy: intelligence, friendship, strength, and poetry (2006).

The collective works of Eisner, Gardner, Gurian, Hoffman, Gilbert, and McNiff communicated parallel opinions to those of the Balinese. They professed that children are born with delicate and powerful tools and characteristics uniquely inherent to themselves.
If properly fostered, those mechanisms would activate when necessary to aid children in navigating through external stimuli that was sometimes even dangerous.

Children in this country and abroad have been so accustomed to being measured against each other in so many facets, that the immeasurable values, such as character, compassion, expression, empathy, imagination, and creativity have given way. If children are lucky, they may sweep against a wet brush extending from whatever artistic instruments and passages they are able to come in contact with, and it will hopefully leave a lasting stroke of human compassion.

Part III

When the term diversity is used, particularly in the forum of education, one thinks of racial profiling and socio-economic status. However, the term also accurately describes many other varieties within the classroom. If children are to stay interested and succeed in school, teachers must be mindful of the array of contextual aspects pertaining to the child’s life outside of the classroom. This awareness could in turn emphasize the importance of building healthy relationships with students so teachers can be better equipped to help them improve academically and socially. The unspoken language within the classroom is often a powerful tool for gauging what students are learning, and for becoming more aware of the nuances within the classroom unrelated to curriculum and pedagogy. While learning to read and write is imperative, they are without merit if they do not help students become productive citizens. This review will explore some of the characteristics of what makes a good teacher, the importance of reading between the lines to develop positive classroom relationships, and some examples of those who have
successfully managed to teach from a place of compassion and humility.

It is difficult to summarize what type of person or what characteristics one would require becoming a good teacher. However, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) felt it was relevant to hear the voices of the world’s school children for a proper definition. UNESCO solicited participation as part of an international contest to maximize entries. The submissions were then compiled and edited in book form entitled “What Makes a Good Teacher; Children Speak their Minds” (2003) and included opinions from children ages eight through twelve from regions all over the world. The following excerpts exhibit some of the entries:

“The teacher is to students what the rain is to the field.” (Zaira Alexandra Rodríguez (Guijarro, 11, Mexico, Mexique, México);

“It is very pleasant when you sing, play with us, treat us equally and understand the feelings, aspirations and moods of each one of us” (Le Nhu Anh, 9, Viet Nam);

“A teacher must not have any favourites and does not separate the poor from the rich and the not-so intelligent from the intelligent” (Zandile Sandra, 12, Zimbabwe);

A teacher must understand every child’s needs and try to bring out the best in each pupil” (Kimberly, 11, Trinidad and Tobago, Trinité et Tobago, Trinidad y Tobago);

“A good teacher not only gives the lessons, but much more than that: she gives us new ideas and explains to us our doubts. She makes the classes an amusement and not a prison” (Catarina, 10, Portugal).

The responses were prompted with a spontaneous reaction to “What Makes a Good Teacher?” UNESCO received 500 responses from over 50 countries worldwide and most
spoke of desiring compassion, understanding, and fairness. Many showed a deep respect and affection for teachers whom they felt embodied those characteristics (2003).

Author Greta K. Nagel in her book *The Tao of Teaching* (2004) extracted eighty-one concepts from the ancient Chinese book of wisdom, *Tao Te Ching*, and aligned the virtues with current ideas regarding learner centered practices and interdisciplinary instruction. She felt that since the reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching* was a great educator, it seemed plausible to her that the important messages in his work could be appropriately applied to teacher development and preparation. She was particularly interested in the *yin* and *yang* as it related to characteristics of effective teachers. She wrote “At present, our attitude toward teaching is too yang — too absolute, rational and aggressive. What is needed is more yin—intuition, sensuousness, and subtlety-to bring back a delicate balance. Children might then learn those other basics: the wholeness and unity of existence, the art of living harmonious balance with nature and with each other (p. 2). She went on to say that Tao practices help explain why the common pedagogical practices are not particularly successful and that over the years of her experience as a vice principal, she had been exposed to inappropriate and even harmful behaviors toward children. “In an era when children of more and more diverse backgrounds are our students, some practices are simply unacceptable if we want students to learn and stay in school” (p. 8).

Greta Nagel wrote to influence the attitudes of teachers who felt that rewards and punishments were the only means to correct conduct and she was anxious for schools and teachers to provide pleasant environments. She also emphasized the need for teachers to
realize that their work was “indeed social work” and that children are to be treated all differently (not unequally) in spite of their similarities (p. 9).

Nagel supported her educationally equivalent Taoist virtues with examples from three contributing classroom teachers who integrate the philosophy in their classrooms including: Katherine, a lead teacher in a room that served sixty-one kindergartners, first, second, and third graders; Maria taught thirty-four sixth graders from a variety of ethnic groups, particularly Latino; and Joe who was a high school teacher with five class sessions per day. He taught psychology, government, and philosophy. Examples follow:

Be Impartial - In the Tao, all persons are “straw dogs”, or none more important than the other. If a teacher showed greater approval to some children, this would be according to Nagel, a failure. Instead she wrote that a wise teacher is aware of the many cultural backgrounds, personality types, and styles of expression. She encouraged; “Reach out to find points of empathy with all of your students. Encourage them all and find ways to provide equal attention with positive language and a sense of personal responsibility” (p. 25). Katherine connected this idea during her large group activity. She set aside that time to ask the permission of each child to share from individual writing books. Because of the variance of age groups, she noted “indirect-direct” instruction ensuing. She asked for the older students to be patient with the younger and felt the younger students were benefiting from the sentence structure from the older children. This allowed her to pay equal attention to all students (Nagel, 2004).

Avoid Using Force; Don’t Push - Wise teachers allow children to follow their interests and use encouragement and natural influences to promote growth. Students who are
pushed are not responding to their own needs and are being kept from knowing
themselves and developing positive inner strength (p. 95). Katherine employed a loose
structure for the topics her class studied. Children made decisions about what to read,
where to read, and even could choose body posture when reading. Often, she found they
formed loose rows. Katherine always respected book choices and felt contests benefited
no one. She instead sought togetherness of spirit and rewarded choices (Nagel, 2004).

The Weak and the tender overcome the hard and the strong - Wise teachers know that
yielding can win over an aggressor. They turn strength into weakness with caution,
reservation, flexibility, sincerity, and honesty. To Joe, aggressive or disruptive children
are the very kids who make his job interesting. He explained that if they are treated right,
with a certain autonomy, the can become leaders. He suggested allowing the “stuff” to
get out of their system, because they are very emotional, and to deal with these students
successfully one must be un-emotional and keep their cool. He asked “What is more
powerful than water? It pulverizes rock into sand, yet it is supple, yielding” (p. 112).

Have Compassion, practice frugality, be willing to follow - Wise teachers risk caring
for others. They acknowledge that acceptance of simplicity is a rich treasure. They are
not interested in being leaders at all times. Maria had a room full of children who did not
speak English. She knew it would be a challenge to get them involved. She also knew the
children would love having parents involved in their classroom. She created a signup
sheet for jobs within the classroom and little by little communication became easier with
her non - English speaking parents and there was a mutual bond formed. Nagel stated
“Share your leadership. Speak from behind so that you may remain in front without blocking the view (p. 196).

D. Kay Johnston wrote in *Education for a Caring Society: Classroom Relationships and Moral Action* (2006), that if the idea that schooling is relational and that relationships are the context for cognitive and moral behavior, then we begin to see the importance of thinking about building relationships as moral activity (p. 38). She goes on to say that “we must learn not only the information that is part of the academic curriculum, but also to practice being together in respectful ways” (p. 38). What’s important is that teachers realize that a child’s entire self comes to school to be involved in activities and the experience. They long to be responded to fairly yet many teachers find it difficult to meet individual needs (2006).

It seems with curriculum commitments the teacher’s time and energies leave little for investing in the human relations in the classroom (2006). In the book “*The authentic teacher; sensitivity and awareness in the classroom*” (1956) author Clark E. Moustakas stated, “only the most unusual teacher refuses to be defeated by pressures from parents, administrators, specialists, and other teachers. The task of finding a way of reaching the vast potential of each child, of responding warmly, humanly, and tenderly, of being sensitive, is almost insurmountable” (p.2). While these conditions exist for most, teachers must manage themselves emotionally and allow students to grow and discover themselves.

Acceptance, Moustakas wrote, was central to the experience of developing a significant relationship between teacher and child (p. 6). When behavior expectations are
forced upon children, his creativity and self perception are stifled. Also according to Moustakas, a teacher must help the child to feel that what he expresses is worthwhile. He must accept the child as completely as he can, while it is not possible to accept the child and at the same time reject his values and ideas (1956, p.7). To live in terms of the person’s authentic self, said Moustakas, is natural, comforting, and satisfying. “It permits us to be productive, utilize our capacities, and experience joy and happiness in personal relationships” (1956, p. 8).

In Rhythms of Learning: Selected lectures by Rudolf Steiner (1998), Rudolf Steiner concurred “Children enter elementary school with tremendous eagerness and with boundless faith in the individuals who stand before them. Their teacher stands as a representative of humanity who, day by day, will lead the class into ever wider explorations of the world” (p. xxiii). All children, Moustakas (1956) wrote, need love, safety, belongingness, acceptance, and respect as basic conditions to their growth. When they are provided by the human environment, growth will naturally occur.

In the book A Passion for Teaching (2003), Sarah L. Levine collected stories from forty-two experienced teachers to describe the deep connections they have developed with students and their profession. She found that after many years in the classroom, these teachers were still excited, intrigued, and in love with teaching. Levine felt the stories served as an inspiration for all educators and an impetus for those contemplating or just beginning the profession.

Kristie Wolferman, a sixth grade teacher for sixteen years, wrote in her essay entitled Students with Special Needs, “Over the years I have become aware of different learning
styles, brain research, cooperative learning, cultural literacy, and a wide range of educational tools, I have become better equipped to deal with each child as an individual and to help each one develop to the best of his or her potential. Sometimes I’m successful, sometimes I’m not. When I experience success in meeting students’ needs and helping them become excited about learning, I realize how much I love teaching (Levine, 2003, p. 29).

Brenda Morrow, a third grade teacher for sixteen years in El Paso Texas, submitted a passage to the same source entitled *For Each One of Them I Teach:*

I teach for them. For all of them. For each one of them. For Rossellen who at eight had to be the adult in the family, for Rika who spoke very little English, for Sean after his second year at a prestigious university, had his eyes set on a Senate seat. For Jerry, whose father was brutally murdered and found the classroom a haven of peace and safety that a small boy craves when his childhood had been forever robbed by the wickedness of the world. For Isaac, who was in real school for less than three years of his life, the rest of the time spent with countless tutors across the world as he followed his dad’s Foreign Service job. For Naomi whose eyes have seen something dark, whose ears have heard something evil, whose fears are real and great, and who begins to trust enough to seek a hug and loves enough to share a smile that brightens the room. For these kids, I gratefully teach. (Levine, 2003., p. 103)

In Lucienne Bond Simon’s entry entitled “Dear Governor Foster,” author Sarah Levine explained when arts education was threatened in Louisiana, senior teacher Bond Simon created a small accordion foldout brochure illustrated by her students. “Dear
Governor Foster” used drawings and questions to illustrate what would be lost without funding for the arts: “Who will design your car? Who will plan your bridges? Who will be a movie star?” (Levine, 2003, p.51).

The illustrations and messages were so compelling that the arts funding was restored. That experience, said Bond Simon, resulted in an even greater appreciation for her students, and they for her. The artwork can be seen below in Figures 1 and 2.
Figure 1. Dear Governor Foster Part I
Figure 2. Dear Governor Foster Part II
At present, as Nagel stated (1994), attitudes toward teaching are far too yang thus the profession calls for a balance between scientific analysis and ethereal intuition. It should be the aim of teachers to recognize and appreciate the individual child within their own relationship with him or her. In this setting, individuality is encouraged and significance of their experiences takes shape. These relationships have an important place in the classroom. However, it must be a priority of the teacher. The focus of the relationships, blended with compassion and understanding may bridge gaps among struggle, conduct, and academic deficits. Children come to school like a prism radiating many colorful aspects of their personality based on prior experiences. Sometimes those experiences are not conducive to the learning environment. If a teacher adopted the idea that adjustments could be made for such circumstances, perhaps students would feel more comfortable within the institution and would enhance learning capabilities. Many characteristics could summarize a good teacher; however, to reach a child and sustain their interest, one would hope they inhabit at least empathy and compassion. “It is very pleasant when you sing, play with us, treat us equally and understand the feelings, aspirations and moods of each one of us” (Le Nhu Anh, 9, Viet Nam; Levine, 2003).

In conclusion, some traditional educational practices are causing many children from diverse backgrounds to tune out in the classroom. If it is the goal of the education system to prepare children to become lifelong learners and productive citizens of society, implementing creative alternatives should be examined. There is a great deal or research supporting the benefits of an artistic integrated, curriculum and its therapeutic effects on modern society. Integrating the arts in education coupled with building healthy classroom
relationships between the teacher and their students creates a powerful formulation to initiate profound positive effects on the lives of children and the future of society.
Chapter 3

THE PROJECT

Introduction

This Project is an Alternative Culminating Experience for a Master of Arts in Education: Curriculum and Instruction with an Elective Emphasis on Arts in Education. It follows Pathway V: Art Educator as Advocate and Leader Promoting Arts Confident Teachers through Professional Development. This project established a meaningful connection of events primarily utilizing qualitative narrative research. The qualitative research utilized the following methodologies: autobiographical writing, journal writing, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, documents (traditional and electronic), photographs, and teacher accounts.

This project required the narrative inquiry approach so the researcher, the key instrument of the research, could intentionally reflect and analyze a collection of original experiences that illustrate the evolution of herself as artist and educator, contribute to the urgent need for reformation in the environments of our children, develop opportunities for advocacy in the arts, and prepare for a leadership role within art education.

“These narrative beginnings of our own livings, tellings, and retellings, and relivings help us to deal with questions of who we are in the field and who we are in the texts that we write on our experiences of the field experience,” according to Coles and Knowles (1999, p. 70). In support of the narrative inquiry approach, this chapter consists primarily of the researcher’s journal writings written in first person. Names have been changed to protect their privacy.
Evolving Artist

I believe all human beings have an innate need to create. Certainly, a continuum exists ranging from slightly to highly creative, but the basic primitive levels of creativity call out from the depths of our souls. If we allowed for more time to play and became free from convention and restriction, we could discover parts of ourselves we never knew existed. I advocate for schools to allow time to explore and acknowledge the importance of our children’s creativity. This component of themselves has valuable potential to enrich their lives. A famous Irish composer, Thomas Moore (2008), wrote "We are all poets and artists as we live our daily lives, whether or not we recognize our role and whether or not we believe it."

In my research, I examine my own artistic origins and proclivities. I feel it is important to note how blessed I feel to be an individual who was afforded ample opportunity to appreciate and investigate my own natural gifts. I intend to explore events in my life thus far which have contributed to my desire to become an educator; what it is in life that attracts, charms, and captivates me; and why I believe these experiences have supported my advocacy for artistic integration in education and beyond.

I was the first of three (Figure 1.) born to loving and supportive parents (Figure 2.) in Sacramento, California in the summer of 1972. My father was a second generation Mexican American. His family’s heritage originated from Mexico’s southernmost state of Chiapas. My paternal grandfather immigrated to California through the “Bracero Program,” which was prompted by a demand for agricultural laborers in the United States during World War II. My mother was of Scandinavian descent and came from a large,
close-knit, mid-western family. In the late 1950’s, my maternal grandparents packed up their three children and their classic mid-western values and headed west from Wisconsin when my grandmother grew tired of the cold winters.

My mom always told me I was an Irish twin, as my oldest brother was born only ten months after myself (Figures 3, 4, 5). He and I spent a lot of time with my mom’s side of the family. My maternal grandparents (Figure 6) lived just a few blocks away. They loved having us around, and we enjoyed being in the comfort of their home. In the early 1970’s no video games or cable channels existed, so my brother and I found creative ways to keep each other entertained. Often, I was the teacher and my brother was my only student. My grandparents had a semi-circle concrete slab shaped similar to a stage in their back yard. My grandfather watched me pretend to be a teacher on that stage so often, that he hung a chalkboard on the fence behind that slab so my imagination could run wild. Most of the time, as my mom recalls, my brother sat silently rolling his toy car around listening to me pretending to be the teacher, while I unaware that I was not earning a captive audience. I remember spending many hours on that slab at such an early age. From this, my interests emerged.

I always remember loving school. I went to a neighborhood school and had three best friends with whom I glided from grade to grade, hoping for certain teachers and not for others. Looking back I realize how important those peer relationships were when coping with public schools. We were a close bunch and looked out for one another. When I reached the sixth grade, my girlfriends and I ended up in Mr. Franzy’s class. He was a young, handsome, and single teacher. His classroom style back then revolutionized
anything we had experienced before. He played contemporary music in the class, told jokes, and genuinely cared for his students. Over time, he became tightly woven into our four lives, remained in touch through adulthood, and attended all four of our weddings (Figure 7). He made a profound impression on me and made me want to be a teacher that much more.

We were an athletic family. My brother and I played and excelled in youth sports through our entire childhoods. We both played soccer every year until we were twelve. We both also played softball and baseball every spring after soccer would end. My mom coached my teams, and my dad coached my brother’s teams, and they became very involved in the governing board of Little League. I eventually emerged as one of four competitive pitchers for the Northern California Fast Pitch Girls Softball League, which led to training with a professional pitching coach. We were a competitive and athletic family; and I learned a great deal from team sports, but I also knew I always had an artistic side.

Because my parents were always so involved in sports, discussions about arts were rare. Nevertheless, my mother loved music, and I am grateful she passed that along to both my brother and me. My dad was always the one to push education. Above all else, we knew he would enforce our staying in school.

It was my mom’s sister, Kathy (Figure 8), that I believe made it possible for my creativity to blossom. I have interviewed her extensively and have written many journal entries about her influence on me. To her best recollection, she remembers always drawing as a child. She loved to draw birds and trees. When she entered middle school
she got involved in making costumes for the theatre department. Ms. Kimori, her drama teacher, she recalls, really encouraged her talent. In addition to her visual art talents, she also learned to play the piano. She felt she, too, was destined for a life immersed in the arts because it was a place where she felt she belonged.

She eventually chose nursing as a profession, particularly pediatrics and labor and delivery. She then went on to pursue a Master’s Degree from Sacramento State in International Affairs. She did a great deal of traveling all over the world, in particular the Middle East. I asked her: “Aunty, how come you chose a scientific career when you’re so artistic?” she responded “There is a lot of room for the imagination in nursing. Cookbook medicine, the way it’s designed is dry. However, when you’re dealing with humans and human emotions you cannot rely alone on the cookbook. Humans are not textbook.”

She had two unsuccessful marriages and was never able to have children. I believe my brothers and I, and her profession with children and pregnant women, benefited in many ways from that because she was able to pass on her love for children to her work and to her nieces and nephews. My parents were kind enough to share us with her, and she always made our time with her fun (Figures 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13). She recalls, “I felt it was important for you kids to be exposed to the arts, to express yourselves, and to develop an appreciation for it. I wanted you to be well rounded and to be able to express yourselves.” Every year we made homemade Christmas gifts with her. We made homemade pizzas in her kitchen, finger-painted, dressed up in costumes, sang songs, and took trips to Jenner, California to see and play at the beach. I asked her if having a brother so close in age influenced my artistic origins, and she replied “You, unlike your
brother, lived in your imagination (Figure 14, 15). From young age you were demonstrating and practicing, and making and mixing. Your fingers were always moving (Figure 16). I noticed all this when you were about three. You never liked pre-packaged anything. You had to make everything from scratch and put your own stamp on it. Your brother took a different role. He was more of a concrete thinker. He helped to ground you, and you encouraged him to express himself. You both complemented each other. He was willing to try more because of you, and he kept you out of trouble.” She summarized by saying, “You know, some creative people can go off the deep end, so it’s important to surround yourself with grounded people.”

Shortly after high school, I decided to join the Air Force (Figure 17). I was struggling to find direction in community college, and I wanted to set out on an adventure. My uncle had a childhood friend, General McFadden, who was a high-ranking officer stationed at the base where I attended basic training in San Antonio, Texas. I was not aware at the time, but he arranged for me to choose from some of the best professions available in the Air Force. The personnel office sent for me one afternoon and presented me with four job opportunities: an x-ray technician, a weatherman, physical therapy, and graphic arts. There was that “art” word. I probably could have struggled through the more scientific areas, but art was what felt natural, and the opportunity my uncle’s friend afforded me shaped the rest of my life. I know now that I was very fortunate and that most military enlistees out of high school are randomly assigned employment opportunities. I was not aware yet, but General McFadden was once again to be influential in my life.
After basic training in San Antonio, I was off to Denver, Colorado for Graphic Arts training. I arrived in the late fall. Having spent my life in California, those three months in Denver were extremely cold, but I loved what I was learning. At this basic point in technology, we learned to create everything by hand. Computers were slowly emerging. I was excited to be creating and learning everyday with peers I enjoyed. It was a great time in my life. While I was finishing up this trade school, I was called into the personnel office again. Not only did General McFadden arrange for me to select my job, he also had arranged for me to pick my permanent duty station. There were several bases in need of a “Visual Information Specialist,” which was my official job title. I carefully reviewed my choices; Ramstein Air Base, Germany, Vandenburg Air Base, Los Angeles, the Azores, Guam, and Hurlburt Field Air Base in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. I was probably too young to appreciate the overseas opportunities, and instead chose Florida. When I arrived in Florida and saw the green water and white beaches, I knew I had made the right choice. This particular part of Florida is coined the “Emerald Coast” (Figure 18) because the beaches are so white and the water is a turquoise green. Many service men and women change duty stations often, but I was lucky enough to stay in the Emerald Coast through my entire Air Force career, all seven years.

My time in Florida was delightful. My job consisted of supporting a team of instructors from all branches of the Armed Forces. The organization I worked for trained military personnel from all over the world, in all four-service branches, to communicate with one another in time of war and conflict. Our graphics team created the training slides, provided videography support, and I often got to travel when the instructors had to
take their briefings on the road. I spent some time in Germany and Italy in the fall of 1996. To me, northern Italy’s beauty surpassed even the emerald coast beaches. I spent two weeks traveling through the northern part of Italy and spent most of my time about an hour north of Venice. We also drove to see southern Germany, Florence, and Venice. The beauty of Italy is something I will never forget. The food, art, and architecture were far beyond what I had seen in pictures and books. Touring Italy (Figures 19-23) became one of my first powerful aesthetic experiences. I was growing, enjoying my life, and becoming more aware of my blooming proclivities that originated in my youth.

Education from a Parent’s Perspective

While serving my time in the Air Force, I also continued to pursue my education. I took advantage of free courses offered to service men and women. With the training I had received, I knew I could make a career out of Graphic Arts if I chose to leave the service. Still, I always heard my dad’s voice telling me to stay in school. So, I began taking my freshman and sophomore courses part time. I was fortunate enough to have a nine to five job so I could attend school in the evenings. Little by little, going part time, I obtained my Associate of Arts degree. One course I took in the spring of 1996 provided another big change in my life. I took a beginning Spanish class for my foreign language requirement. On the first day of the semester, I was running late, and by the time I had arrived, there was only one available seat. That seat happened to be next to my future husband, Tom. We began dating, and before long I was ready to separate from the military, as I knew we were soon to marry.
Tom was from the south Florida area, so upon my separation from the Air Force, we re-located to Boca Raton, Florida near his family. I took a job with a small university in the Graphic Design department providing lecture materials for the faculty in the variety of colleges. Shortly after my arrival, I learned that the university staff could take courses at a discounted tuition. This motivated me to continue to, once again, pursue my education. Between 1999 and 2003 was a very busy time for me. My husband and I got married (Figure 24), had our son (Figures 25, 26) in 2000, and I graduated Cum Laude in Graphic Design in 2003. In recollection, I realize how different my life could be had it not been for General McFadden introducing me to Graphic Arts and the opportunity to live in Florida.

After my son Jordan was born, I quit my job to focus on being a mother. Motherhood from the beginning for me was somewhat difficult. My son was smart, beautiful, healthy, and extremely active (Figures 27-30). Right away, I found myself noticing that I was having a hard time keeping up with him. I had not been around many other children to compare, but a mother’s instincts are very powerful. I look back now and can see all the things my son has taught me, yet in the beginning, his behavior was very challenging. I noticed a few things that I often brought to his pediatrician’s attention. I noticed his sleep patterns were odd. He was frequently tired and never seemed to benefit from refreshing sleep. He was also very sensitive to his environment. Too many people, loud noises, or too many fluorescent lights caused him to become over stimulated. I filed all of these things away, and my husband and I did our best to keep him healthy and happy.
We decided after I earned my undergraduate degree that we were going to move to California to be near my friends and family. I applied for a graphic design civil service job with the Federal Government in 2003, and it seemed meant to be from the beginning. They flew me out for an interview in June of 2003. I was offered and accepted the job that day. We moved cross country in July of that same year.

We settled in Davis, California where my first task after the move was to shop around for a pre-school. However, I knew with my son’s challenges and personality, it had to be the right fit. We settled on a Montessori preschool. Our experience there set the tone for years of struggling with the education system. Our struggles started with frequent meetings with the director of the school. The subject was always the same. “Jordan has a hard time at circle. He often rolls around in the middle of the circle,” or “Jordan has a hard time playing quietly.” We heard “Jordan has a hard time transitioning from outdoor play to inside quiet time.” My husband always took this in stride, but for me it was much more personal. What was I doing wrong? It must have been my fault. As time went on in pre-school, I started noticing Jordan also had quite a few food allergies. I experimented with his diet and found that eliminating dairy helped quite a bit. I could never get his conventional doctors to give me any credibility, although I could tell when symptoms would subside and that was proof enough for me.

During his time in pre-school I first heard the acronym ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). The director of the school had an older daughter with the diagnosis, and she suggested we have Jordan evaluated. This was a pivotal point in our lives because if we could put a finger on what it was I had been noticing all these years, I
could take some action to help him improve. It never turned out to be quite that easy, but I knew then and now I will never leave a stone unturned relating to his well being. We probably saw most types of mental health professionals available. We consulted developmental pediatricians, therapists, and homeopathic doctors. I started reading a great deal online and familiarizing myself with neurological disorders, pediatric psychiatric conditions, and psychological labels, but none seemed to fit quite right.

As he progressed into kindergarten, we started to notice he was also showing signs of aggression. His two kindergarten teachers were kind and patient, but Jordan was often asked to sit on the wall when he could not keep his hands to himself. His academics were always above average, but his conduct at times had room for improvement. That year, his teacher referred our family to meet with a Student Study Team to detect any underlying learning disabilities. They administered a battery of tests, and he tested above average in all areas. His teachers and I spoke briefly about keeping him another year in kindergarten, as they felt perhaps his behavior was due to immaturity. I decided to let him progress and would wait to see what was in store for us in first grade.

His first grade teacher was another wonderful teacher. She had three small boys of her own, and I think was a bit more familiar with active boy behavior. Yet again, we were met with another Student Study Team early in the year. Her concerns were familiar: troubles transitioning, aggressive behavior on the playground, over-stimulation, and an inability to sit still. My husband worked from home and started to come to the school at recess to observe Jordan’s playground time. We worked with the school, and they with us. While the patterns seemed to continue, Jordan managed to earn great marks in his
academics and was developing normal social relationships. He progressed to grade two, and we kept our fingers crossed that he would outgrow some of the behavior.

His second grade year turned out to be his best yet. He was a bit older, but a few different things happened that year. I started him on probiotics and omega 3 acids. I at times felt pressured to start him on Ritalin, but I could never bring myself to do so. I knew that his not being able to sit still was difficult for the teachers, but he was achieving. He was learning. All the tests showed his above average intelligence. How could I alter his brain with dangerous drugs? Every mental health professional I consulted informed me that there were no studies that outlined the long-term effects of stimulant drugs on the pediatric brain. Instead, I felt safe utilizing and trying all the natural remedies.

That year, I also started volunteering regularly. I was able to see firsthand his classroom habits and noticed his inability to sit still and his constant fidgeting. His teacher that year, Mrs. Reeder, was quite patient. She allowed him to move, and she used his energy to her advantage. She really enjoyed him. She was a remarkable teacher for our son. Watching her taught me a great deal about how to handle all types of children in the classroom. She did call for another Student Study Team meeting, but at this point, we all were solution focused. The special education specialist suggested a rubber mat go on his seat to see if the sensory input made a difference. She also taped Velcro under his desk that he could touch to see if it helped the fidgeting. The school psychologist suggested testing for “Sensory Processing Disorder.” I had read about it prior, and my son did seem to have some of the symptoms. The test determined he exhibited the classic
behaviors, but the cushion and the Velcro were the recommended interventions for this disorder and were already in place. The teacher, the psychologist, the Special Education specialist, and his parents all came together to form a support system for him, most importantly, drug free. I gained confidence in him that year. I also learned that not all kids learn the same way. They all come with different challenges, and the teachers attitude can make or break a struggling student.

Sadly, the following year we moved from Davis. He had to start all over again. I was agonizing over where to place him. At the time, the only frame of reference I had to distinguish one school from another was the Academic Performance Index (API) scores. We moved into a neighborhood that had a high performing school, Gold Ridge. It was a California Distinguished school and had the highest possible API score of ten. That summer I put my son in a camp near the school so he could meet some kids that also attended, so that he could gain some familiarity. Luckily, on the first day of third grade, he did have some kids in his class he had met at camp.

I was anxious to meet his teacher. After having such a great experience in second grade, I was hoping to continue the trend. From the very beginning, the school had a much different culture. The doors were always closed a minute after school was adjourned and his teacher began emailing me constantly about his inability to sit still. My son was often in tears when I would pick him up from school saying the teacher did not like him. Conferences with his third grade teacher were unlike what we had experienced in the past. His former school was very interested in finding solutions to challenges, and this school was not. His teacher had asked me several times to start him on medication
and seemed very unwilling to work with us or Jordan. This school also enforced school rules with “citations.” They were small pieces of paper given to children for various infractions. Jordan came home with many, and I found it difficult to decipher their purpose. The children were not learning from them. It seemed to me, their intent was merely to shame the children. We suffered through that year, but I knew I could not keep him in this environment. Through these collective experiences, I felt compelled to seek alternatives and could not help but to feel compassion for other children with similar challenges in similar environments. It felt as though the antiquated procedures were not adaptable to progressive children like my son and environmental reformation seemed necessary.

Evolving Educator

My son was keeping me busy, but I also found myself experiencing another yearning for professional growth. I always knew I would eventually get into teaching. I was making a good salary, but a starting teaching salary would take some adjusting to. I told myself I was willing to make the jump and found an opening for a Graphic Design Instructor at the Boys Juvenile Detention Center in eastern Sacramento through the Sacramento County Office of Education. I gathered the courage to apply and did very well in the initial interview. After everything I had been through with my son, I felt I had something to offer these boys who perhaps had similar struggles in their primary grades. They asked me in the interview why I wanted to work with at-risk youth, and I responded honestly by saying that I had empathy. I could show empathy in the classroom, and I wanted to make the environment fun. I thought I could create a mix between Mr. Franzy’s class and Mrs.
Reeder’s class. They sent me to a second interview with the district’s Assistant Superintendent, Tom Taylor. I was very impressed when I met Mr. Taylor, because he talked about wanting to create a stimulating environment for his students, not one that operated from oppression. I again expressed my desire to make a dynamic learning environment for the kids, and I believe he shared the same philosophy.

He did not feel I was right for the boy’s ranch, but he did offer me my very first teaching job at another site he managed in Sacramento County. It was a part-time opportunity to teach a Digital Media course at a Court and Community school for kids that, for various reasons, received expulsions from their home districts. The school day ended for that site at 12:45 and Mr. Taylor wanted my extra-curricular Regional Occupational Program (ROP) course to start immediately after the school day. This meant I would have to teach on my lunch hour and make up the time at the end of my workday. I was a first time teacher, and I was so eager for the experience that I was willing to bend myself into a pretzel to make it work. I cleared it with my full time supervisor and my husband and then I was off and running, ready to plan my curriculum. I decided I would expose the students to the basic elements of art, a bit of art history, and then we would move on to creating the computer generated art.

I was very nervous the first day. The class was small, only twelve students, and I had enough experience as a pupil of dynamic teachers to know what I could do to engage them. I also wanted to elevate what they had been exposed to conceptually about art and give them the opportunity to express themselves. The students were between the ages of 14 and 17. Most had either spent time in or had just been released, from juvenile hall. I
had ten boys and two girls. The class was voluntary for students who were passing their basic academic courses. I was lucky that my students were there because they wanted to be. I had never stepped in front of a class before, much less teenagers, but I kept it light and at the same time reiterated the school policies on classroom behavior. I reminded them that if I felt they were disruptive, I could ask that they be excused from the course. For the most part, this kept most on track. Of the twelve students, most did not show regular attendance. However, as difficult as that made my job, when they were there, I made sure they were engaged and processing the information. We played games, I used a lot of peer to peer interaction, and I tossed a small cushy ball to initiate thoughtful responses.

I had two students who made teaching that course a joy. One boy, Danny, only fourteen at the time, had parents with severe methamphetamine addictions. He was a Caucasian boy with a muscular build and long light brown hair, almost to his waist. During the four months of our course, Danny had moved three times. His family finally settled in the back of a camper in a parked truck with no electricity. Danny was very shy and humble and came to class everyday in the same black clothes. I noticed how willing and ready he was to learn despite his home life. I was so impressed with this boy’s spirit and his life and history intrigued me. I wanted to know how he kept his head above water and how he ended up at the court and community school. One afternoon he stayed late to continue to work on the computer. In a non-threatening way, I asked, “So Danny, how did such a bright kid get here?” He described his home school as being very diverse and felt the need to carry a small knife for self protection. He told me his grandfather had paid
for him to take martial arts classes since he was a small boy. He said he knew he could defend himself, but that kids were carrying weapons that martial arts could not combat. One day in gym class his knife fell out of his pocket and his gym teacher was forced to report him due to the zero tolerance weapons policy, which meant an automatic expulsion. He said he was getting good grades, and, despite the threat of violence, he really missed his school. He never mentioned his parents’ drug problems, only that he came from a close family and how important his little eight year old brother was to him. I could only conclude that despite addictions and poverty, his parents were capable of showing love and that his grandparents offered some support. School was perhaps an escape for Danny and a place where he could feel good about himself. He demonstrated that to me. I feel as though Danny did learn a lot about art and design from me, but I learned so much more from him about the determination of the human spirit.

The other student that stood out was seventeen-year-old Blaine, who was six foot three, had a different color Mohawk every day, and multiple piercings in his face. Our relationship began when I noticed how helpful he was when I needed assistance with the audio-visual equipment. “Mrs. Scott, I’ll fix that for you,” he would always say. I must admit, I was a bit leery of him at first because his appearance was so abrasive, but over time, I came to see what his façade was hiding. Blaine was raised by a single mother who later remarried and had more children. Unlike Danny, Blaine would talk willingly to me about his past and enjoyed that I was willing to listen. He and Danny often stayed late to work on projects. This gave us time to share. He explained how many times he had been in juvenile hall and drug treatment facilities, but that he wanted a better life. He was soon
to be eighteen, and he knew his mother would force him out of the house. He told me how his mother’s second set of children always took priority, and he always felt unloved.

I offered my sympathy, but always reminded him how smart I thought he was, and indeed, what an incredible artist he was. His talent surpassed all other students in my class. His imagination was brilliant, and I often told him so. We would have long discussions about a career in design, and how I thought he had what it took to be successful in the field. I explained how the financial aid system worked and not to let economics keep him for fulfilling his dreams. I spent a lot of time encouraging him, and I sincerely meant every word.

When class was wrapping up, we culminated the course with a gallery style art show (Figures 31-42) where the kids could show off their work to parents, faculty, and Sacramento County Education officials. All the students prepared digital collages with artist statements describing the decisions they made about each piece of imagery they chose to incorporate. The show was a huge success, and the kids learned a great deal. I learned so much from them, and I had my first taste of what it felt like to teach and become influential in a child’s life. All of the time I had spent pretending to teach and all of my artistic influences culminated with that art show. My friends and family attended. It was a very proud moment in my life. I wrote letters of recommendation (Figures 43, 44) for both Blaine and Danny and reminded them to continue to excel in school. I promised I would periodically check in on their progress. I felt tired from juggling both jobs, which was an insurmountable amount of work. The added responsibility also took time away from my son, but I truly loved the experience. I was proud that I was brave
enough to take on the challenge. I gave myself the opportunity to follow along the path I had set early in life and was able to apply what I had learned from my son’s experiences when engaging students in the classroom. I was asked to return the following semester, but the time restraints at that time were too difficult. Yet, the superintendent, Mr. Taylor, left the door open for me to return when I felt ready.

Graduate School and Special Needs Advocacy

Not long after my class wrapped up, I started looking into furthering my education once again. I felt like I was ready to go back to school. I did some researching and came across a program at Sacramento State University that combined both art and education, which seemed to be a perfect fit for me, so I enrolled in the program. Everything I was learning seemed so relevant to different aspects of my life, particularly how it pertained to my son’s educational experiences and what I had just been through with my students. All my life I was attracted to the arts, yet I had no idea that I was actually developing a part of my brain that would have otherwise lain dormant. I started to realize how important the arts were to public schools and how important it was for me to do the right thing for my son. If I knew better, I would be able to do better for him. While I was enjoying being involved in the program, my son was still struggling in third grade.

After all the Student Study Team meetings, my pediatrician recommended he be evaluated at the UC Davis Mind Institute. That seemed overwhelming to my husband and me after all the numerous consultations with mental health professionals. This would be one last effort to trust western medicine. We filled out questionnaires, and Jordan met with psychiatrists. Once again, a diagnosis of ADHD emerged. The doctor recommended
we join an ADHD support group for parents of children with the disorder. We met once a week with a psychiatric resident and a group of eight sets of parents to discuss behavioral interventions we could implement both in school and at home. I took careful notes when anything regarding their experiences in school was mentioned, as I knew how difficult it could be for these children. I also noted that parents spoke repeatedly of artistic inclinations these children possessed. Out of eight children, seven parents reported their child preferred to spend their time engaged in some type of artistic activity (Figure 45). The following was noted:

Ethan, male, age nine, often had both parents attend the meetings. Both parents often discussed homework issues with starting a completing homework. The said he had asked for drums when he was about the age of six and had a preference to play the drums during his free time. They also noted him liking to draw, and when his drums were not available, he would play on imaginary drums with his hands.

Merrick, male, age 11, also had both parents attend most meetings. He was the oldest of three children and was the only diagnosed with ADHD. His father was a graphic designer and reported that Merrick liked to draw from an early age. He also stated that he encouraged his kids to participate in artistic activities. Both parents complained that Merrick disliked school and homework, yet he could sit for hours and draw or create something on the computer.

Hailey, female, age nine, was represented in the group by her mother. Her father was in the home, but could not make meetings. There seemed to be a great deal of parent child conflict between Hailey and her mother, as her mother was often the one asking
Hailey to complete school work. According to her mother, “Hailey would rather just sit and draw, she wants to do nothing else.”

Anissa, female, age 12, was represented in meetings by her grandmother. She had been adopted by her grandmother after her biological parent’s rights were terminated. Her grandmother admitted some of her problems in school were related to her losses, however her grandmother often mentioned how much Anissa enjoyed being in the kitchen. Her grandmother stated she was tired of fighting over homework and had given up forcing her to do so.

Kyle, male, age seven, was recently diagnosed. His mother stated she had a great relationship with Kyle’s second grade teacher, yet homework was still a struggle. His activity of choice, according to his mother was making things out of play dough or clay. “It’s amazing how quick I can get him to do something he’s interested in,” she stated.

One set of parents was having a particularly hard time with one of their sons in school. Dillon was in third grade in the Elk Grove School District. His parents spoke of Dillon’s extreme hyperactivity and inattention and how those characteristics hindered him in school. They had tried to build a bridge with Dillon’s teacher, but she, according to his parents, was exasperated with Dillon. At that point, in the twelve-week support class, Dillon had come home to tell his parents that his teacher had really embarrassed him that day. He said because he could not sit still, his teacher pulled his desk and chair in the corner of the room and proceeded to draw a barrier around his desk on the floor with blue painter’s tape. He had come home that day in tears and vowed never to return. What seemed even more disturbing to me was that his parents had immediately gone to
the principal who proceeded to tell them that he supported his staff in disciplinary decisions. I lost sleep over Dillon’s ordeal for many nights. How, I thought, could his family overcome this? I then began to enlighten the parents about alternatives. I did not want to sound condescending, and I was certainly no expert, but Dillon needed any help he could get. I advocated for art, not just for our ADHD children in school, but how they could use it to help with homework struggles. I spoke about there being more kinesthetic curriculums available and even mentioned to Dillon’s mother that perhaps moving near a more suitable charter school might be necessary. I mentioned how parents could go online and read about a school’s philosophy and profile, and that some things more that API scores were important regarding placement. I felt compelled to help these children anyway I could. Throughout the duration of the class and my interactions with these parents, two themes seemed to emerge. Homework was often a hot topic of discussion, and most children with ADHD have a very difficult time sustaining their attention to complete it. In addition, children with ADHD have above average intelligence, and many have artistic inclination. Traditional school and homework was very difficult for them. I found there were many opportunities to advocate for an arts based curriculum based on what I was learning from my graduate program and suggested to parents at meetings as often as I could to integrate some sort of artistic activity into their daily homework routine to see if would relieve some of the tension surrounding this issue.
Advocacy in the Workplace

The education I was receiving in the graduate program also seemed conducive to my workplace. I felt if artistic activity was so effective in an educational setting, it would prove useful in an adult education environment as well. I volunteered to organize monthly team building sessions to monitor if artistic activities for one hour once per month could improve communication and morale between co-workers. The occupational setting included ten employees that work for a Federal Agency in Sacramento, California. Each held a specific vocation including library sciences, website design, copy and duplication technicians, and graphic designers. All employees were on a full time, eight hour a day schedule. The group included three men and seven women and was between the ages of seventeen and sixty-five. One woman was handicapped and used a wheel chair. The meetings lasted approximately one hour. The following narrative describes the logistics of the first meeting to describe how the subsequent meetings were organized and conducted, a description of the activities pursued for the following seventeen months, and lastly, concludes with reflections from my notes taken at the end of each workday that included a team building activity. Meeting data was recorded between August 2008, and June 2009 (Figures 46-55).

The meetings commenced on the first Thursday of August, 2008 and were scheduled for each first Thursday of the following months. The first activity began my eight co-workers and me meeting in a small conference room at a round table at 9:30 a.m. I researched through the World Wide Web for an artistic activity that would also serve as an ice-breaker. I immediately noticed a positive anticipation upon arrival. I brought a
variety of magazines, glue, and crayons and asked each individual to creatively put together a self portrait sharing only what they felt comfortable with. I explained that the images could represent something literal about their personality or something more abstract. When the collage was complete, each member was asked to briefly describe their artwork.

September 2008 - I planned for a handwriting analysis activity. I brought in colored pens and pencils and paper and asked participants to write their names in any color several different times. We exchanged papers, talked about why we chose the colors we did, if they remembered any influences on their handwriting styles, and referred to my answer key that compared handwriting anatomy to personality characteristics. Nine out of ten co-workers attended that day.

October 2008 – I brought in a package of plastic red drinking cups and a music boom box after I had participated in a similar game with my graduate cohort. We stood in a line around the circular table and passed the cups in one direction using only one hand. We began and then stopped swapping cups when the music started and stopped, similar to the game “Red Light, Green Light.” I tried to bring a variety of music to keep the game interesting. All ten team members were present.

November 2008 – Each member of the team was asked to draw names and write three encouraging things about that person in three different colors. After they shared what they wrote, they used craft supplies to decorate it and gave it to the person whose name they drew. Eight team members attended.
January 2009 – I brought in extra craft materials from home and announced a free craft activity. Members could make anything they wished and were asked to share about their artwork. Nine members attended.

February 2009 – Using the same supplies from January, I asked team members to create a craft that represented something stressful in the workplace. We shared our art and stressors at the conclusion of the session. Eight members were present.

April 2009 – Everyone was asked to write a general term they used in the workplace on 3x5 cards describing an activity or object. I collected the cards, and we played Pictionary on a paper easel. Participants chose a card and tried to the best of their ability to draw the word on the card. All ten members were present this month.

May 2009 – This month I brought two fresh eggs from home, two towels, two small wastebaskets, tape, and butcher paper. We divided in two teams and each team had to build a contraption for the egg to protect it from breaking after being thrown from four feet above. We used a small foot stool and a volunteer from each team climbed on the stool and dropped the egg contraption from above. Each team successfully protected the egg from breaking. Nine members attended.

June 2009 – We divided into two teams, and I provided a variety of craft items and brown butcher paper. Each team was asked to build a monster that made some sort of noise and could move at least four feet. No other restrictions were given. All ten members were present.

Observations – In general, I noted a genuine excitement throughout the process and everyone involved enjoyed the mental break from their duties. Some of the jobs held
within the group had seldom opportunity for artistic expression throughout their day. One member, who tended to be aloof and quiet, was often the most extensively involved in the activities and seemed to enjoy it the most. For the three employees I shared office space with, I noted a considerable increase in communication with each other throughout the rest of the day and even into the week that we held meetings.

I received feedback from employees that they were scheduling around the first Thursdays of the month to be able to be present. I felt I organized a variety of activities to try to appeal to all members of our team. Our supervisor was very supportive and also participated in all activities. Her communication with her employees also improved around the time we held meetings.

Overall, I felt my hypothesis had proven true. Artistic expression, regardless of skill or talent, was very useful in the workplace with adult learners. The short time away from duties, especially those with no creativity involved, proved to be beneficial to morale and communication. Meetings were not held in December 2008, and March of 2009, due to scheduling conflicts.

Advocacy Across the Borders

During my summer semester of 2008, my advisors offered the cohort a wonderful opportunity to fulfill a course credit by traveling to northern Nicaragua. Volunteers would team with an established organization that was creating awareness of renewable energy technologies, called Grupo Fenix. The volunteers from Sacramento State and members of Grupo Fenix would collectively teach children from a small rural school in close proximity to the Grupo Fenix facility about solar energy, science, and the water
cycle through artistic means. The community was a small farming town, and while most residents were at poverty level, most had sustainable housing and enough farming resources for food.

I decided to volunteer, eager to meet the children and advocate for the arts. Approximately twenty-two volunteers participated from our cohort, most of which were on summer break from full-time teaching positions. We divided into three groups; science specialists, visual artists, and music/performing artists. My background in electronic arts was more suited for the visual art group, but I instead asked to be included with the music and performing arts. I had been intimately involved in group projects with several of the group members in the past and knew that my experiences with these individuals would exponentially impact the school. Two members of our group were trained in Orff methodologies, and most had years of experience teaching music to children. One, thankfully, was bilingual and offered to translate the material to the children. We had several planning meetings and had wonderful activities planned for the children that both exposed them to the concepts of renewable energy and the power of artistic expression.

We flew in to Managua on July 24, 2008 and took a long bus ride from the airport through the countryside to the northern town of Sabana Grande. We bunked the first night at an eco-friendly lodge deep in the mountains of the country. After dinner we sang songs, and the musicians within our group played the guitars they brought along. It was a magical evening. The music seemed to heal the sights of poverty we all took in on our
ride out of Managua. We turned in early, as the following day we were heading for the school to prepare for the weeks activities (Figures 56-76).

Approximately all 150 children of the school were divided by grade. Group 1 was kindergarten through first grade. Group 2 was second through third grades, and Group 3 included fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. We observed each class individually, met with the teachers, and began to rehearse our lesson plans. We chose for all the children to sing introductory and playful songs in both Spanish and English. We brought plenty of instructional aides and instruments that could be easily manipulated by students of all ages. All of our activities would culminate at the end of our planned week with the students performing a rehearsed procession carrying a large puppet of the sun created by the students and the Visual Arts team.

We saw each group of students at different times of the day. They rotated between performing arts, visual arts, and science. We began by asking each group individually to line up in a circle outdoors. With guitar accompaniment, we sang in English and Spanish with the help of our translator, “Hello There, how are you? It’s so good to meet you! Can you clap your hands and count to ten.” This was repeated with exaggerated body movements four times in both languages. Next, one group member led the children in choreographed movements in rhythm with a drum beat. The beat would start slow and progressively get faster. The children had to perform movements from a slow rhythm to a fast rhythm.

Next, a different member led the children in body movements that imitated a rain storm. The children quietly snapped their fingers, rubbed their palms together, slapped
their laps, and last, stomped their feet. In succession, we asked they listen carefully how
the movements made the sounds of a rain storm begin lightly and progress to a loud
thunder. We also allowed the children in this activity to use rhythm sticks to knock
together when the storm reached the thunder stage.

Last, we taught them a song solely in Spanish that they were to perform at the end of
the week with brightly color scarves. The song “De Colores” gave the children an
opportunity to volunteer to perform individually or with a partner in the center of the
circle with the scarf color of their choice.

Observations - Group 1 was the most difficult to get to stay on task, however it was to
be expected for the youngest age group. The really enjoyed the hearing the sounds and
were very adaptable to the necessary hand eye coordination when instruments were
involved. I observed a great deal of excitement from the children and it seemed our group
of veteran teachers and volunteers, me included, were profoundly impacting these
children. The school was very limited in resources and materials and the exposure we
were able to provide these children was priceless. I noted many smiles and giggles from
both the students and our group members.

Group 2, grades three and four, were definitely more aware of how their peers would
perceive them participating. Once the ice was broken, they seemed to loosen up and
really invest themselves in the activities. There was slightly more involvement from our
translator getting the children to stay on task, as they tended to get over stimulated by the
activity and would get silly. As the week progressed, this age group was more aware of
how their performance would be perceived and the importance of practice. As they
became more rehearsed, they could be heard transferring from building to building humming and singing the words we had taught them. They also loved using the instruments and got so much joy from participating.

Group 3, the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade was a unique group in that there seemed to be a couple of children who appeared to be older than the typical age of a sixth grader, but could not progress to another school for unknown reasons. One boy looked to be at least sixteen years of age. Not only was he much older, but also he seemed to influence the male student’s attitudes. I often noted him making the face like he felt silly. The other older boys would take his lead, and this posed a challenge for us to keep some of the boys engaged. However, as the week progressed, the oldest boy was really enjoying himself, and the others followed suit. The girls at this age were very shy and rejected teaming up with classmates of the opposite sex.

As the week came to a close, we fine tuned our performances, and the children were bustling with excitement. I felt a great deal of satisfaction knowing that I had contributed to exposing these children to the power of the arts, particularly through education, and to their enjoyment of learning something new. The community members gathered with parents and the children marched proudly with their twelve foot sun puppet. The students and staff were sad to see us go, and I know most of us were equally disheartened about leaving. I know firsthand my group profoundly affected these children’s lives as I’m sure the other groups did. It was a week’s worth of work and a lifetime worth of memories for all involved.
When I returned from Nicaragua, I began again to search for an alternative placement for my own son. Even though he was in a highly rated school, the ratings only reflected one aspect of public education and were only measuring reading, writing, and arithmetic. Where were the arts? Throughout the courses I was taking, I became more familiar with alternative styles of learning and curriculum that were available in the Sacramento area. I started to do a great deal of research looking into every charter, private, and non-traditional school available. I comprehensively read every vision and mission statement from many of the schools in the area. I was looking for words and phrases such as “educating the whole child”, and “artistically integrated”, and “kinesthetic”, and “individual learning styles.” My son needed all of those things. Could it be that it was the educational environment that needed aid and not my child?

One school caught my eye because its website spoke in detail about its Waldorf methods, based on the beliefs of the German scholar Rudolf Steiner, that children hearts, hands, and minds should be the focus of education. The kinesthetic curriculum allowed children more movement in the classroom. A Waldorf curriculum also heavily integrated the arts into every day academics. They paint, play instruments, use yarn in handwork, and even manipulate beeswax. They take nature walks, tend an organic garden, and learn through movement. It seemed too good to be true. My son was sports oriented, but I felt that if I could enroll him in this enriching environment, I could supplement with extra-curricular activities at home. There was a substantial waiting list to get into the school, but I waited patiently for nearly eight months.
Two days before the school year started, I received a phone call stating that the school had an opening for him. It was a very difficult transition for him to start yet another new school, but, again, I said to my husband, and myself, “If I know better, I should do better for him.” He has been at the school for three months, and he seems to be adjusting. He told me recently that he likes not having to sit at a desk all the time. Waldorf schools also do not send homework home with students. That has been a big stress relief. I do believe my son has symptoms of ADHD, and a few other acronyms, but as bad as it got sometimes, I never felt comfortable with medication. Maybe one day I will change my mind. I know it can be very helpful for some children. However, I want my son’s bright mind to stay pure. I want to see the potential of his imagination. Under the influence of medication, I was not sure I would ever see that. I plan to watch over him carefully and hope everyday that I have made the right decision for him. I do know for sure that he has parents that are on this journey with him and will do whatever it takes to allow him to feel comfortable in his own skin. All of the roads I had walked until this point, the ladder of my education, my evolution of interest in the arts, the struggles with my son both in and out of school, brought me to a place of being able to help him and support him. During my research for this project, I came across a poem that summarized this evolution:
Mother to Son

Well, son, I’ll tell you:

Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

It’s had tacks in it,

and splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

I’ve been a-climbin’ on,

And reaching landin’s,

And turnin corners,

And sometimes goin’ in the dark

Where there ain’t been no light,

So boy, don’t you turn back.

Don’t you set down on those steps.

Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.

Don’t you fall now—

For I’se still goin’, honey

I’se still climbin’.

—Langston Hughes
Furthering my studies has made me realize at some point I needed to make the leap and get into teaching full time. I have a natural empathy for the ones that struggle. Now with some theory and practice background, I can see that much deeper. Somehow, I feel that all of those at-risk kids were a version of my son, and all of the kids struggling with attention and hyperactivity disorders are in need of someone like me who understands. I need to get back to living in my imagination. That little girl in her grandmother’s backyard on that concrete slab has grown to realize her potential. I want to teach the Blaine’s, the Danny’s, and the Dillon’s, and all those children struggling with rigid methods. I called to check on Blaine recently, and his homeroom teacher was tickled to tell me he had secured financial aid, was enrolled at a vocational college for Graphic Design, and all of this took place during a transitional move into a group home for homeless teens. My heart is full with this in mind, full enough to share, I hope, with the many students I will eventually see unfold their own gifts and imaginations.

Summary

During my research, I was able to connect meaningful events that detailed my evolution as an artist, how my educational experiences contributed to my interests in teaching, how furthering my education provided opportunities to advocate for the arts, and how collectively, those experiences profoundly affected the landscape of my personal life and my family. I was able to reflect and analyze periods of time that exposed me to the importance of artistic expression not only in educational settings, but also how it can benefit the quality of a person’s life. I am most proud of my courage to explore the opportunities that I created for myself, as each led to a underscoring of the importance of
During my youth, my natural abilities and inclinations led me on a path of self-discovery that ultimately led to my introduction to the arts. My artistic discovery led me to motherhood, which allowed me to see the education system through the eyes of a parent. Becoming a parent pushed me to pursue more education, and it was then my interests in advocacy became more prominent.

The arts do heal, as stated in Chapter 2. Artistic expression transcends all age, race, social class, and any institutional setting imaginable. The course of my life has taken me as far as South America to cross paths with people who have proven this to be true. Most importantly, I was able to share it with my own son. Knowing I was able to share this concept, makes this work extremely gratifying. I look forward to continuing to spread the word.
Chapter 4

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This culminating project established a meaningful connection of events and revealed how the researcher evolved as both an artist and an educator and how those collective experiences provided abundant opportunities to advocate for the arts. She was able to integrate artistic expression in several settings; however, most significant was the incorporation of the arts into the lives of children.

The researcher’s field work drew several conclusions. First, the researcher felt that educators can have a profound effect on student’s lives. Their keen awareness in the classroom must match their pedagogical skills. The whole child must be accounted for and acknowledgement of adjustments will be necessary. By exploring her own early experiences, the researcher concluded that the influential people throughout her life offered the encouragement she needed to become a lifelong learner, the opportunity to explore her creativity, and most importantly, become empathetic to other’s needs.

Second, she concluded that artistic integration in the classroom and any form of artistic expression opens lines of communication, negates anti-social behaviors, and can be healing to the human spirit. She felt that becoming a mother of a child who struggles in traditional settings has been invaluable to understanding the current infrastructure of conventional American classrooms. Viewing the customary methods within the schools through the eyes of a parent seems almost necessary for all district officials and educators, especially as a parent of a child who has special needs.
Through her experiences of teaching at-risk kids, she was able to create an environment for them that was solely structured for self expression. The researcher found that the student’s communication through their art was reducing behaviors congruent with at-risk youth, such as truancy, foul language, anger, drug abuse, and low self-esteem. Once a safe environment was established, the researcher’s students were productive and looked forward to coming to class. The students demonstrated positive behaviors throughout the course, which also emphasized the researcher’s belief that children diagnosed with ADHD, or labeled at-risk, were acting out from being in an environment not conducive to how their brains function. The experience also re-iterated to her “It’s the environment, not the kid.” What this means is, if it were traditional for children to experience an arts-integrated curriculum, perhaps society would have fewer children living with labels and stigmatizations.

The researcher’s involvement in the ADHD study group and following her son’s educational experiences also supported this theory. All but one of the children who were represented by their parents within the parent support group had a preference for artistic activity and a rejection of traditional homework methods. The researcher concluded that if the children, who are not functioning well in traditional classroom and/or exhibit ADHD type symptoms, were to have the opportunity to gain exposure to an arts based curriculum, anti-social behaviors would decrease or cease indefinitely. The researcher’s own son’s transition to a school that utilizes an art integrated curriculum has manifested in a reduction of the negative feedback he received while attending a traditional setting.
In addition, the researcher concluded that the positive benefits from artistic expression breaches the barriers of age, sex, language, and cultural diversity. After her work with children in Nicaragua, the court and community school, and co-workers in an office setting, she recorded many examples of the arts bringing forth positive effects on human dynamics. She learned that artistic activity brings joy to any activity. The researcher and volunteers in Nicaragua watched the children flourish with joy and excitement, even when challenged to speak in a foreign language. Most were eager to participate, and the older children who had to step outside of comfort zones, also were able to positively experience the power of the music, the freedom of dance, and expressing themselves artistically. The male and female teenagers exhibited a great sense of pride during their art and had a visible change in their self-worth. The researcher’s co-workers within a Federal agency also showed marked increase in communication, less stress, and improved mood after engaging in an arts-integrated team building meeting. If activities are planned to suit toward the intended audience, the arts can reach anyone at any age, in any circumstance, in any language.

Challenges

Throughout the duration of her project, the researcher found some challenges. First, it seemed that if she were to continue to advocate to parents, teachers, and community members, etc., of the validity of arts in the schools and elsewhere, there needed to be a shift in the media’s messages. Currently, many parents are aware of Academic Performance Index scores, college preparatory courses, and Gifted and Talented programs. She felt this was in part due to the media influence. The challenge at times was
convincing parents and others that while these types of tools and opportunities were indeed valuable and conducive to some children, they were not conducive to all children and that there are alternatives to traditional education. Also, she felt that some parents, most specific to the ADHD parent group, were doing what they thought everyone else was doing instead of customizing an environment to their own unique child, partly due to media and pop culture influence. The researcher felt that for some children, the longer they were forced to conform in traditional settings that were not comfortable, the more stigmatized they would become and the greater cost to their self-esteem. Last, with regard to a loss of self-esteem, particularly in young children, the higher the loss, the more they become prone to delinquency and anti-social behavior.

Another challenge that presented itself involved the children in the researcher’s Digital Media course. She noted that by the age of her youngest student (13 years), they had been through so many years with no artistic integration at school, home, or otherwise. Peeling them away from pop-media, and facades they had created to be accepted, and to get them to reach authentic thoughts and expression was challenging. It took some time to create a safe environment for them to do so.

Last, the researcher found it difficult sometimes to find and plan team-building group activities with a participant in a wheel chair. The complexity and intensity of the activities that required full mobility were always modified to accommodate the group member. However, difficulty developed when the researcher found activities that required mobility on foot that she knew the group would enjoy and could not be modified without compromising the integrity of the game.
Reflections

When the researcher was in the process of collecting all of the data, it was very easy to identify key points in time that were relevant to the project. Writing about those events allowed the researcher to understand why her point of view and voice of advocacy were so important. The positive events propelled her forward fulfilling dreams and ambitions. The negative experiences were important to demonstrate why changes were necessary and why advocacy for the arts was worth pursuing.

In most of the settings, children were the common theme to examining the status quo. The fragility of their self esteem resonated most with the researcher. Her point of view weighed heavily on preventative measures to anti-social behaviors. The younger they are when matched to their unique environment, the more academic and professional success will follow.

Another concept that recurred through much of the research was “empathy.” The researcher found that all settings were conducive to the arts, but also these activities required the teacher, organizer, or parent to carry a keen awareness of their students, children, and fellow man. All group settings required some sort of customization so that someone was not made to feel left out or uncomfortable. Throughout her evolution as an artist, several influential people were sensitive to her unique needs, which fostered her creativity. As a teacher, the researcher noticed that some children needed different methods to encourage their participation. The same was true when working with the children in Nicaragua. The older boys needed special attention to entice them to be free of what others thought and just enjoy the experience. The office setting employees
required the same attention. Not only was there a person with physical special needs, but attention was needed in areas of comfort levels, reminders that activities were not competitions, and to watch carefully how participants were engaging in tasks. Sensitivity to the environment was a key idea.

Last, the researcher also found it necessary to retain enthusiasm in every advocacy setting. She was always cognizant of the benefits and possibilities of the arts. Without enthusiasm in all scenarios, the message would have fallen flat. She needed to be enthusiastic with all the children and persons to give life to the concept of self expression. It became important to breathe life into the activities that for so many were already dead. With enthusiasm and sensitivity, advocacy in the arts can go a long way.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this project, the researcher makes the following recommendations for parents, teachers, administrators, and community members:

- Art advocates dedicate even more time to reaching powerful media outlets. Media messages have been proven to influence public opinion and behaviors. Examples such as local television news outlets, newspapers, newsletters, and World Wide Web blogs could lead to more national exposure.
- Teachers be required to attend sensitivity/diversity training. Training would address special needs children’s requirements, alternative pedagogy practices, and signals requiring action for children who do not function or function at low levels.
- Teachers help educate parents about integrating the arts in homework routines to reduce frustration and rejection.
• Parents who are aware of the importance of arts in education assemble and advocate for more artistic integration within the districts.

• Administrators of districts, whose primary students are at risk such as court and community schools, be required to attend training on the benefits of the arts in non-traditional classrooms.

• All teacher education programs incorporate at least one course addressing artistic alternatives in pedagogy and methodologies.

Suggestions for Further Research

During this project, the researcher noted several ideas that could warrant further research. The first was investigating and measuring children who have been diagnosed ADD/ADHD or other mild brain abnormalities, progress in alternative, arts – integrated classrooms. More research in this area, specifically monitoring behaviors, could further prove the importance of alternatives to traditional methods.

Also, surveying parental awareness of the benefits of art in education would be interesting. Canvassing a large group of parents from a variety of districts, schools, even states would reveal what messages they are receiving about the benefits of art in education, what criteria they used in choosing a school, and what they value most in education. This would build a foundation for understanding why they make the choices they do about their child’s education.

Finally, a study of current teacher’s attitudes, methods, and interventions with regard to children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD would give a better understanding of current practices. Practices could be measured based on effectiveness and usefulness.
Conclusion

Throughout this body of work, I have gathered and analyzed numerous sources of information that advocate for the arts in education. These resources not only explain the benefits of artistic activity in any setting, they act as a voice for connecting society to the beauty of the world around us. Self expression teaches us about ourselves, about our cultures and traditions, and can function as an avenue for restoration.

During my time of study, I watched the world differently. I kept with me the conceptual idea that artistic expression was a therapeutic instrument capable of rectifying some of society’s tribulations. It proved to be very relevant to investigate my own experiences with the arts, as it allowed me to conclude how this concept materialized for me.

I intend to continue to lend my energies, voice, talents, and abilities to support such an important purpose. I believe it is so important for those who trust the supremacy of integrating arts in our schools and lives, to feel responsible to share the information with others. After all, this type of work would ultimately contribute to a society valuing critical thinking, intellectual and imaginative growth, spiritual enrichment, and deepened sensibilities. With those as central values, perhaps it is possible the therapeutic properties the arts provide may have to be called upon less and less. I am one of those who acknowledges the powerful benefits of the arts and do feel a responsibility to increase the awareness.
Appendix A

Family History
Figure 3. Me at 6 months old
Figure 4. My parents wedding
Figure 5. My Irish twin

Figure 6. My brother and I
Figure 7. My brother and I

Figure 8. Grandmother, brother and I
Figure 9. Mr. Franzy at my wedding
Figure 10. Aunt Kathy playing the guitar

Figure 11. My brother and I fingerpainting with Aunt Kathy

Figure 12. My brother and I playing board games with our aunt

Figure 13. My aunt letting me express my creativity

Figure 14. Playing dress up in her nursing uniforms

Figure 15. She took us to the park to climb the trees
Figure 16. Expressing my creativity

Figure 17. Living in my imagination, my favorite picture of me

Figure 18. Fingers always moving

Figure 19. Air Force enlistee
Figure 20. Fort Walton Beach, Florida

Figure 21. Venice, Italy

Figure 22. Wine tasting in Sacile, Italy

Figure 23. Florence, Italy

Figure 24. St. Mark’s Square, Venice, Italy

Figure 25. My new Italian friends in Sacile’s Trattoria
Appendix B

Student Artwork
I created this piece of work as my self portrait to show that in the midst of chaos there is beauty. It relates to me because I can look and sometimes be crazy, but I'm still a caring individual. I used the barbed wire to show the unmanageability in my life and the use for institutions to manage things for me. I placed the four horsemen of the apocalypse as a background to show how my foundation was made irresponsibly, with no thought of a future and how I was disregarded and shoved to the side as a child with a new competing sibling and my hate for rules and authority. I showed the flower shining through to show how much I changed and the beauty within. My favorite material to use is anything that creates controversy because I love to debate things. The best thing about the work I do is I am actually good at it.

Figure 33, Male Student A, 17 years, artwork and artist statement
There are 6,470,818,674 people in the world. Some are running scared. Some are coming home. Some tell lies to make it through the day.

Others are just now facing the truth. Some are evil men at war with good. And some are good, struggling with evil. 6 billion people in the world, 6 billion souls, and all you need is one.

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Figure 34, Male Student A, 17 years, artwork and artist statement, 12/2006
Since humans have been on earth we have done only one thing, destroy. Why I chose to do this piece is because I am tired of seeing trash everywhere. I wish the whole world could see this so they know the dangers of littering. I don't understand why someone would want to destroy their home, it's just stupid. The world is not your trash can.

Figure 35, Male Student B, 14 years, artwork and artist statement, 01/07
Why I chose to do this work is to show that there is always more than meets the eye. In my previous work I chosen to say not to judge a book by its cover and this is another example. Why I choose to do this is because first impressions are usually wrong and people should always take time to look before they judge. Each symbol I chose relates to my life in one way or another.

Figure 36, Male Student B, 14 years, artwork and artist statement, 01/07
I hope you keep on walkin' till you find the window,  
and each road leads you where you want to go,  
I hope you never look back, but ya never forget, 
I hope you always forgive, and you never regret, 
    Oh, you find grace, in every mistake,  
and you always give more then you take
Family Comes First

Figure 38, Male Student C, 16 years, artwork and artist statement, 01/07
I chose to do my art about drunk driving because I think it is very important for people to be aware of the dangers of drinking and driving. In the past, I have witnessed the aftermath of car crashes and it sends chills up my spine. I don’t think that anybody should have to go through that.

Figure 39. Male Student D, 14 years, artwork and artist statement, 01/07
I hope that days come easy and moments pass slow, and each road leads you where you want to go,

And if one door opens to another door closed, I hope you keep on walkin' till you find the window

I hope you never look back, but ya never forget, all the ones who love you, in the place you left.

Figure 40, Male Student E, 17 years, artwork and artist statement, 02/07
Do you have what it takes to climb the ladder of SUCCESS?

Figure 41, Male Student F, 14 years, artwork and artist statement, 02/07
Figure 42, Male Student F, 14 years, artwork and artist statement, 02/07
Figure 43. Female Student, shortly following incarceration, 15 years, artwork, 02/07
Figure 44, Male Student G, 17 years, artwork, 02/07
Appendix C

Letters of Recommendation
February 9, 2007

To Whom It May Concern,

I have had the distinct pleasure of having [Name] as a student in my computer graphics class Fall/Winter 2006/2007 at E.L. Hickey High School. During these 4 months, [Name] was more than the ideal student. In order to achieve the highest grades and my deepest respect, he demonstrated outstanding work ethic, punctuality, and maintained focused on assigned tasks.

My course taught the students how to manipulate digital imagery, appreciate aspects of fine art, and required critical thinking skills when authoring artist statements. [Name] was always the first one to class, listened with integrity during lectures, and was a wonderful creative thinker. He finished the course with several wonderful pieces of art. In addition, one test was administered to review principles and elements of art, and [Name] achieved a 100% score.

Since his classmates, fellow teachers, and I hold him in the highest esteem, I sincerely recommend [Name] as the ideal candidate for any educational institution, extra curricular activity, or otherwise.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi Scott
Computer Graphics
ROP Instructor

Figure 45, Danny’s letter of recommendation
February 9, 2007

To Whom It May Concern,

I have had the distinct pleasure of having [Blake Charlton] as a student in my computer graphics class Fall/Winter 2006/2007 at E.L. Hickey High School. During these 4 months, Blake was an excellent student. He had a natural talent for artistic subject matter and was genuinely enthused during the course. He demonstrated an outstanding work ethic, consistent punctuality, and was very thoughtful when considering tasks.

My course taught the students how to manipulate digital imagery, appreciate aspects of fine art, and required critical thinking skills when authoring artist statements. Blake listened with integrity during lectures, and was a wonderful creative thinker. He finished the course with several wonderful pieces of art. He is truly a highly artistic individual and I believe this path will allow him to achieve what ever he puts his mind to.

Since his classmates, fellow teachers, and I hold him in the highest esteem, I sincerely recommend [Blake Charlton] as an ideal candidate for any educational institution, extra curricular activity, or otherwise.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi Scott
Computer Graphics
ROP Instructor

Figure 46. Blaine’s letter of recommendation
Appendix D

ADHD Support Group Data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>ADHD diagnosis</th>
<th>Difficulty with homework</th>
<th>Artistic Inclination reported</th>
<th>Parent comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Drawing and playing drums</td>
<td>He'd rather draw and play the drums than do anything; Often, he'll play air drums, or imaginary drums with his hands constantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merrick</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Creating on the computer</td>
<td>He could sit for hours drawing or creating something on the computer. He's always complained about homework. Now I use time on the computer as an incentive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailey</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Drawing and Painting</td>
<td>We fight constantly about her ever starting her homework. She's so much rather just sit and draw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>none noted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anissa</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Paint, play in kitchen</td>
<td>I have given up on my telling her to do her homework. She's twelve, she has to be responsible. She's only interested in television, painting, and helping me in the kitchen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Building and playing with</td>
<td>I have worked a lot with his teacher about books and legos motivating him to do his homework. He's really good at making buildings out of books and creating things with legos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>All he wants to do is sit and draw, play with his friends and watch tv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Make things out of play dough</td>
<td>It's amazing how quick he'll do something that he wants to do, like play with clay or play dough. Homework, forget it. Struggle, struggle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Art Activities in the Workplace
Figure 48. Co-worker showing her forest artwork symbolizing an environment that made her feel less stressed.

Figure 49. Supervisor showing dog and fish art symbolizing activities that made her feel less stressed.

Figure 50. Male co-worker showing his fishing artwork symbolizing an environment that made him feel less stressed.

Figure 51. Co-worker displaying her music artwork symbolizing what eases her stress levels.

Figure 52. Co-workers proudly displaying their artwork created during a group project.

Figure 53. Co-workers displaying artwork created during team building session.
Figure 54. Co-worker working on pop-corn art project

Figure 55. Disabled co-worker working on pop-corn art project

Figure 56. Co-workers participating in artistic team building

Figure 57. Co-worker participating in group project during team building session
Appendix F

Science through Art in Nicaragua
Figure 58. Nicaraguan children

Figure 59. More Nicaraguan children

Figure 60. Flag salute on day 1 at the school in Sabana Grande

Figure 61. Getting acquainted with children in the classroom

Figure 62. Science through the Arts - American volunteers teaching grades K-2 music and movement activities about the environment

Figure 63. Grades K-2 enjoying learning the activities
Figure 64. Artwork about the water cycle created and displayed by Grades 3-4

Figure 65. Third and fourth graders learning through music

Figure 66. Third grader creating art about the water cycle

Figure 67. Performing arts volunteer group teaching third and fourth graders

Figure 68. Making friends

Figure 69. Fifth and sixth graders handling sun masks they made with the Visual Art group
Figure 70. Fifth and sixth grade girls skeptical at first about participating with male peers

Figure 71. Students acclimate while a volunteer teaches a song and dance using a drum beat

Figure 72. Fifth, sixth, and older male children begin to enjoy the music and dancing

Figure 73. Older male and female children become comfortable playing and learning together

Figure 74. Children proudly displaying their sun masks getting ready for the culminating parade
Figure 75. Local teachers displaying the children’s outside the classroom on the day of the parade

Figure 76. The 18 foot puppet at the front of procession create with the Visual Arts team

Figure 77. Children performing for parents and community guests

Figure 78. Performing Arts team leading the children in their performance on our last day of our visit
References


