DEVELOPING THE ART OF TEACHING
BY CREATING AN ARTS ENRICHED CLASSROOM

Kristen G. Brunson
B.A., Biology, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1978

PROJECT

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A Project

by

Kristen G. Brunson

Approved by:

__________________________________, Committee Chair
Crystal Olson, Ed.D.

_______________________________
Date
Student:  Kristen G. Brunson

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Rita Johnson, Ed.D.  ___________________  Date

Department of Teacher Education
Abstract

of

DEVELOPING THE ART OF TEACHING BY CREATING AN ARTS ENRICHED CLASSROOM

by

Kristen G. Brunson

This project is an Alternative Culminating Experience for a Master of Arts in Education: Curriculum and Instruction. This researcher utilized Pathway II, narrative research, to develop her teaching artistry. The research documented her efforts to incorporate theory of arts-enriched education into classroom practice.

Prior to the research, this teacher did not incorporate arts into the classroom in a significant way. Reasons for this were as follows: lack of arts instruction experience; past negative encounters with her own arts education; and current educational focus by the school district primarily on math and language arts instruction for the purpose of meeting criteria set forth in the federal bill “No Child Left Behind.”

This teacher researched literature supporting the importance of arts inclusion in education. She completed instruction in children’s theater courses and Waldorf philosophy and practice applied to public education, and researched literature relevant to these subjects as well.

Community time in her fifth grade classroom was enriched by introduction of theater games and music about three days a week. She also improved her teaching artistry by using the Waldorf inspired approach to teach science and language arts curriculum. Lesson plans included active and emotional experience through arts to connect students to concepts.

The teacher documented her progress developing teaching artistry as follows: She observed her implementation of the lessons and responses to them by the students. She documented her own and students’ dialog as well. Observations were written in a journal. Following the activity, the teacher reflected on the degree of success in the implementation of the activities and how their delivery could be improved for greater effectiveness. These reflections and subsequent delivery efforts also were recorded in the journal.

This researcher’s narrative documents her courage to successfully engage fifth graders in arts-based activities. The researcher learned the importance of confident presentation of activities, as well as the importance of strict guidelines for student behavior during activities for arts-based activities to be successful. As artistry improved, the narrative documented the joy students experienced, improved social skills and
willingness to participate in new experiences, and their increased motivation to learn the subject material. In short, the project documented the power arts brought to this fifth-grade classroom, and the inspiration the author has received to continue her pursuit of creating an arts-based classroom.

______________________, Committee Chair
Crystal Olson, Ed.D.

______________________
Date
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Acknowledgments | vi  |
| List of Figures  | ix  |
| Chapter         |     |
| 1. INTRODUCTION  |     |
| Purpose of the Study | 1  |
| Project Significance | 2  |
| Project Procedure  | 5  |
| Limitations       | 7  |
| Definition of Terms | 8  |
| Organization of the Project | 10 |
| 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE | 12 |
| Arts Theory and Practice in Education | 12 |
| The Importance of Artistry in Teaching | 20 |
| Improving Artistry by Study of Theater Arts | 24 |
| Waldorf Philosophy and Practice as Teaching Artistry | 29 |
| Conclusion       | 35 |
| 3. METHODOLOGY   | 36 |
| Introduction     | 36 |
| Author’s Previous Arts/Teaching Experience | 37 |
| Context of the Research Project | 40 |
| Arts Enriched Community Time | 43 |
| Arts Enriched Curriculum Inspired by Waldorf Pedagogy | 52 |
| Summary          | 77 |
| 4. REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 79 |
| Appendices       | 82 |
| Appendix A: Student Instruction Sheet for Figure 1 Activity | 83 |
| Appendix B: Sample of a Fifth Grade Science Quiz | 84 |
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Student Paragraph and Drawing of an Atom</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Student Representation of the Three States of Matter</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Student Colored Pencil Drawing of the Plant Organs</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Student Table of Plant Organ Systems and Their Functions in Colored Pencil</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Student Colored Pencil Representation of an Animal Cell</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Student Crayon Drawing of the Pumpkin Box</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Student’s Crayon Drawing of a Fire God</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Student Oil Pastel of “La Bamba” Character</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this project was to develop artistry in teaching by incorporating arts into the author’s teaching practice. Research of theory and practice literature supported the importance of including arts in education; however, little emphasis had been placed on the arts at the author’s school setting of eight years. Students did not receive any arts instruction from teachers outside the author’s classroom. Also, this teacher had very limited personal experience with arts, and no experience incorporating arts into instruction.

Although the state of California has Visual and Performing Arts standards, the state and district educational interest has primarily been focused on math and language arts standards. One reason for this is that policy makers for our country’s education have placed academic emphasis on number logic, language development, and scientific method. Therefore, other representational forms of intelligence have been devalued. In January 2002, these policy makers enacted federal bill, “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB), which mandates that all students (including students who are economically disadvantaged, are from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, have disabilities, or have limited English proficiency) must meet the state academic achievement standards for mathematics and language arts by the year 2014. Schools must demonstrate Average Yearly Progress (AYP) toward achieving that goal. Proficiency for all students is measured on standardized multiple choice tests. The author has concluded that these
narrow policies and assessments do not serve the best interests of many children. These policies can alienate many students, turning them away from what society really needs: citizens that have developed a life-long love and pursuit of learning.

Upon reflection about this author’s teaching style before the project, the narrowness of educational academic policies, and the importance of arts in brain development, as well as bringing joy to the classroom, she took the initiative to begin this project’s aesthetic journey. She planned to incorporate arts to build a sense of community in the classroom, and to provide students the opportunity to develop critical thinking, problem solving skills, ability to take risks, and personal confidence. She also planned to develop artistry using arts in instruction to reach a wider range of multiple intelligence learners. Of utmost importance was developing the artistry to successfully present this new style of teaching practice. Ultimately, she believes that improving her teaching artistry to include arts was a step in the right direction to create a joyous classroom of students beginning to have a desire to be life-long learners.

Project Significance

Reasons abound why students do not develop, or lose a desire to learn at school. Math curriculum is rigorous and fast paced, requiring introduction of a new concept each day before there is time to explore the previous one. Math and language arts instruction pacing is set by the district in this author’s setting, as well as the program utilized for instruction. Students must be tested according to the district schedule before many of the students have had enough time to learn a concept well enough to demonstrate that they are learning. Students increasingly face academic concepts for which they may not yet be
developmentally ready. Their progress as a person at school depends on meeting state
determined proficiency levels.

There is scant recognition and appreciation for other forms of representation such
as those provided by the arts. The current education system has created a difficult
environment for many students to develop their full potential as contributing members of
society. Diversity of abilities helps society meet its needs, and art has played an important
role in defining societies throughout history. It cannot be excised from educational
development without severe impairment to society. The educational system is turning
out students who cannot appreciate their cultural or personal development expressed
artistically. Many teachers today are instructed to eliminate time spent on arts because it
is not important for the state standards testing.

The author agrees that all students need basic math and language arts skills. In
addition, though, in a free society, a student’s education should progress according to the
student’s interests, not just the government’s. Therefore all students should receive an
education exposing them to multiple modes of knowing and expression of knowledge,
enabling them to determine for themselves their personal aim toward life-long learning.
Without such an education, they will not know what possibilities exist. The current
mandated educational priorities make it extremely challenging to expose students to arts
education. Many teachers give up trying. This teacher’s project helped her increase arts
exposure by developing artistry to incorporate it into other areas of required curriculum.
This project also improved her artistic capability of tapping into the multiple intelligences
of her students, and improving overall interest in learning.
Another reason teaching artistry should involve the arts is that certain art forms are effective in building personal and community skills. The author has wanted to improve this facet of her teaching. This teacher has had many students who do not have appropriate social skills. Many of her students are alone when they get home from school because parents are working. Children are not allowed to play outside because there is no one to supervise them, or parents do not feel the neighborhood is safe. Home life for many students involves hours of watching TV and playing video games. Often families do not have routines or scheduled reasonable bed times. Today’s economy is causing many families to move from their homes and communities and even to move in with other families to survive. The author has had many students who are in foster care, have a parent in jail, live with grandparents or other relatives, or are in single parent families, or come from various living arrangements due to divorce. Often families are coping with someone with addiction issues. Students have sometimes attended several schools by the time they enter this teacher’s classroom. Students have known relatives or neighbors who have been shot or victims of other violence.

Regardless of who is responsible for these social problems, if a child is to learn anything at school, that child must feel that the classroom is a safe place for them to be with other students. Otherwise, the survival portion of their brain dominates, preventing academic learning from taking place. Safety for them includes getting along with others. The classroom needs to be a place of social justice where bullying is not tolerated, and where they feel comfortable enough with classmates to risk exploring open ended problems and new activities in which everyone is a player. Teachers usually have a few
activities they utilize at the beginning of the school year to help students get to know each other. But just getting to know each other is not enough for a classroom to have a successful learning environment. Developing a sense of community takes continual effort throughout the year. The author’s project incorporated theater, movement, and musical arts into teaching artistry that would facilitate such classroom community development.

Project Procedure

The author first reviewed literature relative to educational theory and practice that supported the importance of the arts in education. She also researched the components of teaching artistry and the importance of its development. The author enrolled in a children’s theater class at the California State University, Sacramento for the 2009 spring semester, and a puppetry class for the 2010 fall semester. She studied these theater art forms, and envisioned how to incorporate theater arts into her teaching artistry. The author also reviewed literature that supported ways theater arts are beneficial to education. She attended several plays to see examples of theater components she had studied.

The author had heard about Waldorf schools in which the arts were integral to curriculum delivery and development of character and soul. To learn about this approach to education, the author attended the Waldorf Summer Institute for Public Educators for two weeks in July of 2009 at the Rudolf Steiner College in Sacramento. While at the Institute, she attended lectures on Waldorf pedagogy, and child development theory. She participated as a student in a hands-on intermediate grade classroom led by a Waldorf instructor. While participating in the intermediate classroom, she experienced
introduction of main lessons through the will, followed by invocation of feelings toward subject material. Academic concept development was the final curriculum stage. The author also attended classes in singing and visual art while there. In addition, she attended a beginning recorder class and a form drawing class. She read literature on the history and theory behind Waldorf schools.

The author conducted narrative research to develop teaching artistry from September, 2009, through January, 2010, in a fifth grade classroom at Larchmont Elementary School in North Highlands in Sacramento County, California. Development of teaching artistry included incorporating theater games and singing into community time two to three days each week. She kept a journal documenting the activity delivery and students’ experiences. She reflected on the success of the activity administration, and documented efforts to improve effective delivery of games and music. She also documented student response to the activities in her writing as well as the overall impact to the classroom as a whole.

She also documented artistic teaching development incorporating arts into other curriculum. Similarly, she documented the lesson delivery and evaluated its effectiveness in engaging students and improving their understanding of concepts. She also reflected on how to improve the lesson presentation artistry to be more effective. There were two primary subjects in which she integrated arts: making connections to literature, and making connections to science concepts. She emulated Waldorf teaching practice by developing will activities and emotional attachment activities to prepare student minds for academic instruction. She collected visual art samples and science test samples from
content areas.

Limitations

There are four factors considered as limitations to this project. First, this teacher had only taught fourth grade the previous eight years of teaching experience. During the second semester of her Master’s Program, she was notified by the school district that she would be transferred to another school, and possibly another grade for the following school year. At the end of the second semester, the district assigned her to a fifth grade class at Larchmont Elementary School nearby. Much of the author’s time during this project has been devoted to becoming familiar with the fifth grade curriculum, instead of just being able to focus on arts based instruction delivery. She also had to learn the capabilities of fifth graders compared to fourth graders.

The second limitation is that there was little time available for lengthy lessons. Community time was usually only 15 minutes three times a week. Because of this school district’s highly structured curriculum pacing and testing schedule, it was difficult to make extra time for arts based curriculum activities. Teachers are closely monitored for compliance. Some activities had to be broken into short sessions over several days.

The third factor impacting the progress toward developing a sense of community was that some students moved away, and new students would be enrolled into the classroom who were not familiar with the activities and the rules of engagement. We would need to go back to simpler activities to retrain the participation rules. The ability to progress to increasingly more difficult theater activities was much slower than the author anticipated.
The final limitation to the community activities was that students had very little experience with this type of play. For example, the author has introduced a few activities from the Education Through Music course. It took a lot of effort to get the students to choose to participate. The author has spoken with teachers from schools that routinely have these types of play activities. They say that students join right in because they have been participating in the games from very early grades. Getting fifth grade students who have begun to worry about their image in the eyes of their peers to choose to participate was difficult. This was one part of artistry I did not count on having to develop! Because they have had so few experiences with group activities, the author also spent large amounts of energy developing teaching artistry for effective management of the activity. Students easily lost focus due to the distraction of being in a group with students trying to play around with other students or seek attention from other students.

**Definition of Terms**

*Aesthetic experience* – an experience leading to growth because the experience has been internalized, evaluated and synthesized into a new meaningful order for the person.

*Average Yearly Progress (AYP)* – Schools must demonstrate a set average yearly progress toward achieving the goal of 100% proficiency of their students by 2014.

*Blocking* – In improvisation, this is when a player does something to block or negate the offer of another player.

*Compound* – a material consisting of more than one kind of atom bonded together.
Condensation – When gas molecules lose enough heat to become liquid.

Element – a material consisting of only one kind of atom bonded together.

Engagement – Refers to students’ involvement and participation in class activities.

Evaporation – When a liquid absorbs enough energy for the molecules to become a gas.

Improvisation – The spontaneous performance of a person. This requires creativity, open-mindedness and quick thinking.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Federal law that mandates all students in all grade levels meet the state academic achievement standards for mathematics and English/language arts by 2014.

Nucleus – the center of an atom, which is composed of positive particles called protons, and neutral particles called neutrons. Electrons are negative particles that orbit around the nucleus.

Periodic Table – a table used in science that lists all the elements by their atomic number and is arranged according to an element’s chemical and physical properties.

Phloem – Tubes that take glucose, or sugar, produced during photosynthesis, from the leaves to other parts of the plant.

Photosynthesis – The process by which plants make their own food from water and carbon dioxide. A plant can make its own food because the leaves contain chlorophyll, which facilitates the chemical reaction. The process makes a sugar called glucose for the plant food, and oxygen.
Sidecoaching – This is done by the teacher during theater games. It is the calling out of a word, phrase, or sentence that keeps the game players focused.

States of matter – whether a material is in a state of being solid, liquid or gas.

Sublimation – when a solid material changes state directly to a gas.

Theater games – games used in theatre to improve or practice the skills of improvisation such as quick thinking,trust in groups, spontaneity,physical communication, portrayal of a character, and vocal quality.

Venn diagram – A graphic organizer with overlapping circles that is used to compare and contrast more than one thing.

Will – Waldorf educators’ term for learning through active experience.

Xylem – tubes that take water and nutrients from plant roots to the rest of the plant

Organization of the Project

This project contains four chapters. These chapters explain the research, methodology, reflections, and conclusions reached about developing teaching artistry to include arts based learning.

Chapter 1 is the introduction. It provides the purpose of the study and its significance, as well as the study’s limitations, definitions of terms, and organization of the project.

Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature. This review included the following areas: arts theory and practice in education, the importance of improving one’s teaching artistry, the relevance of theater arts in the classroom, and an overview of Waldorf educational pedagogy and its application to the public school setting.
Chapter 3 is the explanation of methodology of study. It justifies the practice of narrative research, explains the author’s background related to the study, and the setting of the study. This chapter identifies the participants, and narrates the process of developing the author’s teaching artistry and her conclusions.

Chapter 4 is a reflection of the study’s effectiveness in illustrating the power of the arts in the classroom, as well as a guide for future artistic development in the author’s life-long disposition to learn and teach. It also provides recommendations for action by the author and other teachers to preserve the arts and arts based education.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Arts Theory and Practice in Education

The democratic society of the United States holds the belief that all children should receive an equal education. To this end, “No Child Left Behind” legislation has been enacted with the goal of all children in this country reaching proficiency according to educational standards. Incorporating arts in school curriculum provides learning access to a broader base of students. Students will have available to them different forms of representation to make meaning of and to communicate what they have learned to educators and society, as well as multiple avenues to pursue their own learning pathways. The end result will be a more creative, flexible, socially responsible citizen, with a life-long disposition to learn. Many students today are not well served by public education’s limited view of the forms of representation that demonstrate intelligence. Educators need to take a closer look at what theories of arts in education can offer to curriculum and instruction, and at the outcomes of programs which have incorporated the arts into their educational practices.

Currently, educational standards for proficiency narrowly emphasize the forms of language development, number logic, and scientific method as the means to represent intelligence and cognitive thinking. Students take one size fits all, standard multiple choice tests which assess their proficiency in these subjects, limiting the forms of representation available to students to process and demonstrate what they have learned. According to Elliot Eisner (1998), this type of assessment provides little information for
educational researchers to learn about a student’s cognitive processes or how to improve a school’s educational practices. Eisner (1998) also argued that emphasis on these limited forms to represent learning, while ignoring other representational forms of learning, can lead students to believe that problems have only one solution, and that other representational forms of intelligence and cognitive thinking are not valued. In other words, equal access to education cannot be accomplished.

To delineate just how impoverished the current system of education has become, compare today’s mandated educational practices with the theories of leading educational philosophers John Dewey, Donald Arnstine, and Elliot Eisner. They believed that education should be a deliberate and thoughtful learning experience. These philosophers viewed learning as a pathway that involves relevant social experiences from which one grows. Arnstine (1967) believed that in a democratic society, educational curriculum should be based on supporting a student’s freedom to choose the direction of this pathway of relevant life experiences. A curriculum relevant to one’s personal and social life instills a disposition to learn, which he felt was one of society’s most important needs. Therefore, the role of the teacher and school would be to assist by providing curriculum that enables the student to make thoughtful choices in this regard. According to Arnstine (1967), the critical component to creating this disposition was a teacher with a disposition to teach; one who can “provide the conditions under which children can learn” (p. 371). Arnstine felt the teacher was best suited to provide the conditions because he/she takes responsibility for the learning outcome. The teacher knows where to begin with the student and the content that will be appropriate, because he/she is aware of the
student’s background knowledge and interests. Because of having the freedom and knowledge to choose from a wide variety of available curricula, the teacher will provide a learning environment that will enable the student to grow. The teacher will provide the student with opportunities for experiences aimed toward the student’s desired target, keeping in mind the student’s relationship to greater society and those needs. Conversely, in today’s public schools most teachers do not have such autonomy. The mandated curriculum text is usually provided to teachers, instead of being given the ability to choose and tailor grade level curriculum to specific students’ interests. In addition, teachers feel pressured to teach to the tests mandated to measure a school’s progress, thus narrowing students’ access to relevant curriculum. Current public education rarely attends to producing teachers with the disposition of which Arntine speaks.

Furthermore, Elliot Eisner (1998) stated that “The task of education, acculturation, and socialization is to convert brains into minds. Brains are born, and minds are made” (p. 23). What he meant was that a school’s curriculum altered a student’s mind, and that teachers were the ones in charge of the direction and monitoring of this change. To facilitate this change, according to Eisner, students must develop qualitative senses as well as quantitative ones. Development of language and science are quantitative. Discursive representation of knowledge requires language mediation to put forth propositions such as scientific theories. Visual forms of knowledge represent nondiscursive learning; the making of meaning through images, a more direct way of learning that exists even before language has developed. For example, art critic John Berger (1972) stated
Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which established our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight. (p.7)

Eisner (1998) argued that this visual form of learning is just as important as discursive learning. For example, charts, spreadsheets, maps and models are examples of visual learning. They represent something that is communicated easily to the viewer. The image-maker had to internalize, evaluate, and finally synthesize the images. The arts such as dance, theater, visual art, and film, also are non-discursive visual forms of representation. The important distinction is that the arts emotionally express an individual’s processed experience. It is a real life experience. Similarly, John Dewey (1934) stated

If all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist. There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible and audible qualities, and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence. (p.77)

Therefore, the arts should be incorporated into the curriculum because they are another important form of cognitive thinking and intelligence. According to Dewey
(1934), a person grows by having an aesthetic experience. Such an experience is based on one’s background knowledge and experiences, the starting off place. Like Arnstine, Dewey stated that the experience is of social relevance, and not external to the process of one’s daily life. Because of this relevance, it has an aim, or purpose. As the person moves toward a target, he/she will have several experiences along the way from which to learn and grow, and the target will often be adjusted, as the doing progresses. To develop Arnstine’s “disposition to learn,” a student’s active, growing experiences must be internalized, evaluated, and synthesized, or remade into meaningful order for the student. Arnstine believed that to make the experience relevant, the synthesis must be meaningfully expressed to others, therefore providing social interaction with the community. Dewey (1934) believed that art is the culmination of such an aesthetic experience. Art shares with society the deliberate and thoughtful expression of an aesthetic experience. Art’s synthesis, abstraction, and expression require higher level thinking skills. Therefore, educational practice should teach students artistic skills so they may utilize this highly cognitive form of expression. Another reason to incorporate arts into curriculum is that art forms of representation draw on Gardner’s multiple intelligences, giving access to learning and expression of knowledge to the diverse learning styles of society’s students (Eisner, 1998). Unlike standardized testing focused on linguistic and logical-mathematical forms of intelligence, the arts offer a learning pathway to students strong in musical, kinesthetic, spatial-visual, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. Democratic schools should not devalue these intelligence forms.
Also, different types of acquired knowledge will lend themselves to different forms of representation. Students educated to express an aesthetic growing experience in forms the arts can offer will be better equipped to contribute to a democratic society. The development of their imagination and creativity provides flexibility and an understanding that often in real life there is more than one answer to a problem. Eisner stated that the dispositional outcomes of arts incorporated curriculum were

…a willingness to imagine possibilities that are not now, but which might become. A desire to explore ambiguity, to be willing to forestall premature closure in pursuing resolutions, and the ability to recognize and accept the multiple perspectives and resolutions that work in the arts celebrate. (1998, p. 99)

His point was that a democratic society’s schools should increase differences among students, not diminish them. Communities benefit from a diverse base of problem solvers.

Several current approaches demonstrate ways the arts can enhance curriculum in schools. Carl Orff, a musician, developed one such program based on his pedagogic concepts developed from his experiences working with children. Orff-Schulwerk is a program where teachers develop a broad base of knowledge in music, singing, dance, and movement to utilize in the classroom (www.aosa.org). Access to this broad knowledge provides students with multiple intelligence pathways to build confidence and feel successful. In accordance with Arnstine’s requirement for a disposition to teach, teachers can choose what to include in their lessons. Students also have choice about what they
will do, thus fostering a disposition to learn. Carl Orff’s approach was “Tell me and I
forget, Show me and I remember, Involve me and I understand”.

The Richards Institute also promotes learning through music, rhythm and motion
through a program called Education Through Music (www.richardsinstitute.org). An
overview of this program as well as Orff-Schulwerk was presented during class in the
Masters program. The songs and activities prepare students’ minds to receive instruction
in any curriculum area with a heightened awareness. This is because students must learn
the activities through careful observation, and kinesthetic involvement. Students invest in
learning because the activities are fun to do. Teachers must have engagement for learning
to take place, and arts can provide this to students that would otherwise not be engaged.
Another pedagogic practice involving the arts is Project Zero. Students have a uniform
access to curriculum because it is presented diversely according to Gardner’s multiple
intelligences. For example, students can demonstrate their knowledge about social
science by creating visual art or a play. Again, the teacher can choose how to present
lessons to students, and students have choices on how to synthesize the relevance of what
they have learned, including the cognitive forms of the arts.

Theater is a form of artistic expression that can be used in schools to teach social
justice, an idea integral to our democracy. Theater of the Oppressed was created by
Augusto Boal in response to Pablo Friere’s theories in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. This
political form of theater promotes dialog between actors and the audience. The spectator
actually becomes involved in the acting for the purpose of finding solutions to social
problems, and promoting change (Boal, 1992). This form of representation provides real
dlife relevance and teaches creative problem solving skills.

The Boston Arts Academy provides a successful example of arts theory and
practice in education. Students interested in the arts come from a wide range of cultural
and socio-economic backgrounds and are not chosen based on academic requirements.
Ninety-five percent of students in the Academy are accepted to college. The Academy
operates on the belief that studying, making, and integrating art into academic subjects
would vividly engage students of widely varying abilities, enormously increasing their
high school success. Headmaster Linda Nathan (2008) stated that integrating the arts
increases student success because of the following reasons

The arts help young people develop a critical lens toward the world. The arts
show that problems can have more than one solution. Through the arts, children
learn to make good judgments about qualitative relationships. Unlike much of the
curriculum in which correct answers and rules dominate, judgment counts in the
arts. The arts provide another language, a way of working together with disparate
young people and creating an experience that will be appreciated by others. (pp.
178-179)

For successful incorporation of arts into curriculum, authentic assessment must be
developed that will focus on the student’s process of learning and ability to describe,
define and reflect on what is being learned. Eisner (1998) outlined several criteria for
reshaping more meaningful assessment of a student’s personal and societal capabilities.
For example, assessment tasks should reflect tasks that students will encounter in life
outside schools. The assessment should indicate how students solve problems, and also should have more than one solution, such as in everyday life. Assessment tasks should also reflect the values of the community, and students should have choice in the form of representation used to display what they have learned. According to Eisner, such assessment would be useful to educational researchers in determining how students learn, and how to improve the quality of teaching. This comprehensive form of assessment will necessarily require teachers to develop a disposition to teach which includes the cognitive development incorporated in the arts.

When developing school curriculum, it is important to keep in mind that there are multiple modes of knowledge that inform and develop human cognitions, and all are of value. Teaching arts and integrating arts into curriculum can provide a more equitable education to all students and should be considered when setting the goal of our country’s “No Child Left Behind” legislation. According to many educational theorists, the purpose of schools is to increase the student’s ability to solve problems relevant to daily life, and to society as a whole. A powerful tool to use to accomplish this purpose is education in the arts.

This project attempts to broaden the educational experience of the author’s public school students by development of the author’s artistry in teaching through study and incorporation of the arts.

The Importance of Artistry in Teaching

To become a teacher with a disposition to teach, one should consider the artistry of teaching itself. Great teachers excel at encouraging motivation (the desire to learn),
involvement (an active interest in what is being taught), and concentration (sustained focus on the task). According to Louis J. Rubin (1985), education professor of the University of Illinois, there are four primary attributes of artistic teachers. These attributes are the ability to make decisions intuitively; possessing a strong understanding of their subject as well as their students; the feeling of competence, expecting success; and being exceedingly imaginative (p. 17). This last attribute, imaginativeness enables creative teaching strategies that spring from an artistic teacher’s educational ideology, and sense of role. An artistic teacher’s ideology is self-developed over time. Respect of a teacher’s sense of beliefs is important to the teacher’s psychological well-being according to Rubin. Without this respect, teachers cannot feel purposeful, nor take pleasure from their tasks, not to mention inability to be effective in the classroom.

When considering teaching artistry, creativity is therefore a very important component. The good news is that ability to be creative exists in everyone, and can be expanded through purposeful effort (Rubin, 1985). Marjorie Spock, Waldorf teacher and writer, stated that as a teacher strives to develop artistry, “He finds himself developing perceptive faculties of which he never dreamed. As he becomes aware of his growing powers he is filled with a confidence that spurs him forward” (1985, p. 127). However, becoming more creative involves risk of failure. The artistic teacher needs to be willing to take these risks, and can benefit from an environment that nurtures such risk taking. Creative teaching also stimulates creative behavior in students, because the teacher is a model for the students to emulate. Creativity assists a teacher’s ability to solve problems about the most effective way to deliver curriculum. This component of artistry reduces
monotony in the classroom, and can be much more effective than conventional teaching (Rubin, 1985). For example, creative teaching can provide students access to a wider range of intelligences than just the linguistic and logical-mathematical forms so prevalent in traditional teaching. Artistry is not creativity for the sake of entertaining students, but for an effective, efficient, and meaningful deliverance of important curriculum. Teaching is more effective when a larger number of students can be reached the first time material is presented to them.

Another important aspect of artistic teaching is the ability of the teacher to perceive the classroom situation. Artistry in teaching enables the teacher to sense the mood of the students, and have an understanding of, and an interest in all students. For example, an artistic teacher perceives whether a student is inattentive due to boredom, or because the student feels alienated. Knowing a student’s background helps a teacher perceive what might be used to interest them. This perception helps a teacher evaluate instruction effectiveness for an individual student, or for the class as a whole. In other words, the artistic teacher adjusts his or her instruction to fit the learner.

The art of perception is accompanied by intuitive decision-making to determine how to proceed. Intuitive decision-making is vital to artistic teaching in order to make decisions quickly and effectively. Intuition can lead a teacher to abandon a lesson perceived as ineffective, or to capitalize on teachable moments. It is problem solving on the spur of the moment (Rubin, 1985).

According to Rubin, artistic teachers also work with efficiency. They decide what they need to teach, and then decide on the best way to deliver the curriculum to the
students. They use efficient classroom procedures, minimize behavior issues, and keep students motivated (1985).

It is this teacher’s conviction that her artistry in teaching can be improved by incorporating arts for a more creative, intuitive, and efficient delivery of curriculum and life skills. Students are emotionally invested in learning when the arts are incorporated into the classroom. Eric Jensen, member of the International Society of Neuroscience, and experienced teacher writes and lectures about brain compatible learning. He stated that “research supports the value of engaging appropriate emotions. They are an integral and invaluable part of every child’s education” (1998, p. 81). When emotions are evoked, the brain releases chemicals that affect a person’s behavior. The chemicals released with positive emotions can stimulate the brain, making it more receptive to learning. If the emotions are negative, different chemicals can stimulate the part of the brain responsible for fight of flight behaviors. When this happens other sections of the brain involved in learning are essentially shut down. The arts can be an effective means to keep the emotions positive, developing confidence, teamwork, focus, problem-solving and joy of student learning. Incorporating the arts is an efficient means of delivering curriculum to a wider range of students. According to Jensen, incorporation of arts at school can reach students not ordinarily reached. For example, arts provide challenges for students at all levels, whether gifted, or delayed. Students of lower socioeconomic status gain just as much or more from the arts. The arts can be used to foster better student relationships, cognitive flexibility, and to ignite a love of learning in an environment of discovery (2001).
Improving Artistry by Study of Theater Arts

One area of the arts that is instrumental to improving teaching artistry is theater. The study of theater has two major benefits. For the teacher, improving theater skills helps the teacher function as writer, director, and actor in the classroom. It can be said that the classroom itself is real life drama, and teaching is in itself a performing art! As in theater, a teacher in the classroom stands always in the perpetual present moment (Langer, 1967). Both acting and teaching require spontaneity. The teacher must constantly perceive whether students comprehend a lesson, and the teacher must be prepared to adjust the lesson plan accordingly. The mood of the classroom varies from day to day, and from class to class. Just as an actor must adjust his tempo to an audience, so must a teacher alter timing, emphasis and delivery to accommodate the class of students. A teacher constantly improvises, which is an important acting skill, to meet these ever changing situations.

In addition, both the actor and the teacher must utilize the suspension of disbelief to enter into a shared fantasy with an audience. For the teacher, this audience comprises of the students, and the fantasy is the imagining necessary to be transported into the moment of the lesson. For example, a teacher might ask the class to imagine they are an astronaut on the space shuttle headed for the International Space Station, or a child on a farm in a colony during the American Revolution. Like a theater audience, a classroom experiences joy, sorrow, anger, and humor. With students, as with an audience, these feelings are infectious, and so the teacher must interact with the entire class, as well as on an individual basis.
In summary, artistic teachers act using spontaneity, non-verbal communication and role playing to stimulate learning. Rubin (1985) stated that “…teachers must function as playwrights, directors, and actors. They emulate playwrights when they organize a lesson; they behave like directors when they orchestrate the various components of the instruction; and they become actors when they execute the teaching itself” (pp. 115-116).

This teacher’s aim, or purpose, is to instill within the student a desire to learn. She finds the path to this aim under continual adjustment, and will achieve artistry as this teacher masters the aesthetic experience of incorporating theater games to reach the aim. The second benefit of improving teaching artistry through theater is its use in the classroom for activities involving the students themselves. Just as the study of theater enables a teacher to be more willing to take risks, more confident, and an effective problem solver, theater based activities in the classroom can equip students with these same abilities. Heller (1995), stated, “Drama activities help transform school from a place where we tell students what to think to a place where we help them experience thinking” (p.13). Theater games in the classroom are one artistic approach to fostering cooperation and acceptance among students. Cooperation and peer acceptance are critical components to creation of a safe learning environment. According to well-known philosopher, Piaget (1932), children need to interact with peers in order to progress through the moral stages. An effective way to provide interaction that facilitates moral growth is through group games in the classroom (DeVries and Kamii, 1975; Way, 1967).

There are many examples of theater games being used in the classroom to develop focus, cooperation, and teamwork. Michael and Pamela Malkin (1975) developed a 12
week theater unit of activities that developed cooperation, imagination and concentration. The unit required three one-hour classes a week.

To learn more about theater and how to use it effectively in the classroom, this researcher took Children’s Theater course THEA 118 at Sacramento State University in the spring of 2009, with Professor Mary Robinson. This researcher’s previous experience with drama during her own middle school years, left her feeling extremely intimidated in this arts area. The middle school teacher judged students very critically about everything that was done. However, this researcher learned a completely different approach to theater through the Children’s Theater course. In this course a variety of theater games were introduced to the students. Everyone played the games, including the instructor. After playing the games the instructor encouraged students to evaluate what they learned from their experience through discussion. These playful games were designed to encourage qualities that are important to producing resourceful, cooperative students, as well as accomplished actors. Games had different areas of focus. Some games focused on building teamwork, others on problem-solving and improvising, while others were geared more toward theater skills such as becoming familiar with stage space and pantomime. The games were fun, and the atmosphere was relaxed and uncritical. This researcher became more confident and willing to get involved in the activities with any students. She also realized the connection between these games and her own personal development of teaching artistry.

This researcher recognized the usefulness of these games in building a cooperative classroom environment by having fun. This experience paralleled Viola
Spolin’s philosophy concerning children and theater. Spolin’s work with theater for children is well-known. In her book, *Theater Games for the Classroom* (1986), she stated, “The theater-game workshop is designed to offer students the opportunity for equal freedom, respect, and responsibility within the community of the schoolroom” (p. 3). In the 1937 *Handbook for Teachers* it was recognized that drama could be “a joyful game in which [the child] is almost unconsciously trained in all virtues of self expression” (as cited in Redington, 1983, p. 18). Much research supports the importance of play for children, and its ability to foster learning. According to Stuart Brown, M.D. (2009)

Parents and educators, corporate leaders, and others need to become convinced by the evidence that long-term life skills and a rewarding sense of fulfillment – and yes, performance – are more the by-product of play-related activities than forced performance. True mastery over a lifetime comes from one’s internal play compass. When parents and teachers push too hard to get kids to perform, children do not experience feelings of competence and do not create from within their own sense of mastery. (pp.110-111)

The research supports Spolin’s statement (1986) about play in relation to the theater games she devised for children

Play is democratic! Anyone can play! Everyone can learn through playing! Play touches and stimulates vitality, awakening the whole person – mind and body, intelligence and creativity, spontaneity and intuition – when all, teacher and students together, are attentive to the moment. (p. 3)
There are three essential components to theater games that this researcher needed to become familiar with for development of her artistry (Spolin, 1986). The first component is focus. Focus is a problem that is essential to the playing that can be solved by the players. It sets the game in motion, and allows democracy to evolve, protecting players’ dignity and privacy. It is important to note that the focus is not the objective of the game itself. However, the effort of the players to stay on focus generates the energy required, and creates mutual support. To keep students focused, the teacher must develop effective “sidecoaching.” Sidecoaching, the second component, is the calling out of a word, phrase or sentence that keeps players on focus. Good sidecoaching skills involve waiting for play to emerge, and use simple, direct calling out as students continue to play without stopping. It gives the teacher a place in the game as a fellow player. Spolin stated, “Sidecoaching alters the traditional relationship of teacher and student, creating a moving relation. It allows the teacher/director and opportunity to step into the excitement of playing (learning) in the same space, with the same focus as the players” (p. 6). The third ingredient to successful execution of theater games is the evaluation of the game. The teacher poses questions to the players that deal with the problems posed by the focus. It is important not to give any opinions that something done was right or wrong. Audience players learn to respond with respect to only what they observed, without making judgment. Students are then free of peer group or authority pressure, therefore having an authentic personal experience. Such an experience helps students learn to trust that they and their fellow players can make decisions. When theater games are used effectively, students are more willing to take risks, and seek freedom of expression.
Jensen stated that dramatic arts develop the neurobiological systems responsible for educational skills such as quick-thinking, mental model development, task sequencing, memory, self-discipline, problem-solving, and persistence. Furthermore, he states that theater helps students develop emotional intelligence, and acceptable social skills. In addition, theater and movement, both components of theater games, activate the motor-cerebellar-vestibular system, important to brain development of balance and skills related to reading (2001). Although public school testing ignores these attributes, they are necessary foundations affecting student learning, and an artistic teacher should strive to develop skills in these areas. Theater games are a valid approach.

Waldorf Philosophy and Practice as Teaching Artistry

This researcher also attended the Waldorf Summer Institute for Public Educators at the Rudolf Steiner Institute in Sacramento, California, in 2009. This was a two week lecture and hands-on course demonstrating the philosophies and practices of Waldorf School educators. Waldorf schools are known for their incorporation of the arts into everyday learning. This researcher found the program extremely enlightening, and a good model of how arts can be used effectively at school. According to Joseph Chilton Pearce, internationally known lecturer on child development, Waldorf education uses a practical and artistic approach to “nurture the intellectual, psychological and spiritual unfolding of the child” (Statements on Waldorf Education, compiled by the Rudolf Steiner College Development Office).

The Waldorf School was conceived by Rudolf Steiner, a well respected philosopher from Germany who lectured around the world in the early 1900s. He was
asked by a factory owner to design a school based on his philosophy of child development, and so the Waldorf School was founded in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919, for 1,000 children of tobacco factory workers. Steiner’s view of what schools should do for children is very different than the academic standards-based goals of today’s public schools. Currently, public schools set curriculum standards to be met each year of a child’s instruction. Heavy emphasis is placed on math and language arts with rigorous and frequent testing. Some of these standards, as well as the strict time table for accomplishing them, are questionable when child development philosophy is considered.

In his “Lecture for Prospective Parents” (Stuttgart, August 31, 1919) Steiner stated that “a real education takes care that body, soul and spirit will be intrinsically free and independent” (2003, p. 46). In other words, his school vision would not turn out workers suited only for industrial corporations, or the needs of a particular government. Waldorf students would be confident in their ability to solve problems, have a strong moral compass, and possess a respect for the earth. Waldorf students would mature into adults who would live and work according to what is intrinsically right for them and a greater good in the world. According to Steiner, accomplishing such an education would require artistry in teaching (1919/2003). Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D., Director of Mind Styles Consulting Service, stated, “Waldorf fills a need for a creative, artistic approach to learning that is hard to find elsewhere” (Statements on Waldorf Education).

The Waldorf School pedagogy was based on Steiner’s view of child development that there is a rhythm in human life based on three seven-year stages of development. He acknowledged that each child can vary from the typical cycles, but there are definite
recognizable patterns to development. Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D., stated that Steiner’s approach “was to begin with a deep inner vision of the child and the child’s needs and build a curriculum around that vision” (Statements on Waldorf Education).

According to Steiner’s philosophy of child development, in the first seven years of life, the child attempts to find a relationship between himself and the world around him. Assisting the child in development of their physical body is very important during this stage of development. The child learns primarily by imitation. He accepts the way his world is without question. Therefore the Waldorf School provides a loving, nurturing environment with lots of real world activities to be imitated. Here the Waldorf concept of “will” comes first, as a child tries to “do” everything. During this first developmental cycle, the corpus callosum, or bridge between the left and right hemispheres of the brain has not developed enough for a child to learn reading through the proper pathway that combines phonemic awareness capabilities of the left hemisphere with image making capabilities of the right hemisphere (Petrash, 2002; Johnson, Lecture notes, 2009 ).

Unlike public school, reading at a Waldorf school is not forced upon children until they are developmentally ready according to Steiner’s view of child development. Nancy Poer stated during her lecture at the Steiner Public School Institute on July 8, 2009, “We are working against nature by pushing children to do things that they are not yet developed to do.” Instead, during a child’s early years, Waldorf schools focus on will activities that help the child’s brain develop the corpus callosum, or brain bridge. The arts are used for this purpose in the form of movement, music, dance, and learning crafts such as knitting. Poer stated the Waldorf philosophy that “the hands teach the brain to
think” (Lecture, July 8, 2009). Eric Jensen, member of the International Society of Neuroscience, and experienced teacher writes and lectures about brain compatible learning. He has stated that some children are not ready to read until age seven or ten, and that this is just as normal as children that begin to read at age five or six. He feels that many children that have been labeled as developmentally delayed in reading really are normal (1998). Educational psychologist Jane Healy stated

> Before the brain regions are myelinated, they do not operate efficiently. For this reason, trying to make children master academic skills for which they do not have the requisite maturation may result in mixed-up patterns of learning. I would contend that much of today’s academic failure results from academic expectations for which students’ brains were not prepared—but which were bulldozed into them anyway. (1990, p. 67)

There are physical signs, such as the loss of a child’s baby teeth, that the body has developed sufficiently to the point that it is now ready to work the brain (Goral, 2009). Such physical changes signify that the child has entered the second seven year cycle of development. Around this time of development, picture thinking begins. Learning by imitation slows down, and the child is ready to learn from an authority figure. It is very important that the Waldorf teacher provide a good role model, with loving authority (Spock, 1985). During this stage children learn better when their feelings are engaged in what they are learning. The Waldorf teacher’s artistry includes rich storytelling such as fairy tales that facilitates image making in the child’s mind, and invokes the senses. This storytelling, and skillful incorporation of other arts such as drawing, painting, singing,
dancing and learning musical instruments provide emotional attachment to the main lesson (Petrash, 2002). The scientific validity of facilitating learning through emotions was verified previously through citation of Eric Jensen, 1998.

During this second seven year cycle, a child also goes through what Waldorf philosophy calls “the nine-year change”. At about nine years of age, the child no longer sees a perfect world, and starts to notice life’s incongruities. The child’s idealistic world is beginning to fragment. Reality slowly enters. Waldorf teacher artistry recognizes this change and adjusts storytelling to myths and legends from around the world that demonstrate man’s trials. Lessons are artfully presented to break wholes into parts, complementing the child’s emotional development. For example, fourth grade is the time that a Waldorf teacher introduces fractions in the subject of math. An example of the artistry of a fraction lesson was demonstrated by Rev Bowen, a Waldorf teacher from the Steiner Institute. He told a story from India that involved man’s trials in relation to a tree with golden fruit. The next day, he presented an art lesson that involved the students, those of us attending his class, using crayons to draw a tree. As we learned to make branches and roots, we also learned how fractions divide and are related to each other. Rev stated, “Artistic work is important because we are in the peak of the seven to fourteen year development where feelings are very important, and can be expressed in art” (Lecture notes, July 7, 2009). The artistic teacher’s loving authority is key to guiding a student through this period of fragmentation of life and the world. It is one reason Waldorf teachers ideally stay with their students from kindergarten through eighth grade when possible. The trust the student has developed in the teacher over time is very
important as the teacher guides the student through this second development cycle. The Waldorf teacher “is not intent upon a momentary goal; he has a whole lifetime’s growth and development in mind. Such an aim makes him as patient as it does untiring” (Spock, 1985, p. 127).

The third developmental cycle of the child occurs at the onset of puberty, around age 14. Although teenagers remain active and emotional, their brain has developed the capacity for critical thinking. At the time of high school, a Waldorf student has been well prepared by their teacher with a well-rounded view of man and the universe. The confident Waldorf student will now leave their elementary grade teacher to study subjects from specialists (Petrash, 2002; Spock, 1985).

A Waldorf education addresses the three stages of child development through three key capacities; active experience, emotional response, and conceptual understanding (Petrash, 2002, p. 32; Staley (Lecture notes, July 8, 2009). A Waldorf instructor’s artistic use of the arts for active and emotional engagement, prepare students for conceptual understanding. The second stage of development, grades 3 through 8, involves daily routines incorporating these capacities. Subjects are artfully introduced first with activity, followed by development of feelings for the subject. The path has now been laid for the student to engage in conceptual understanding to which he feels connected, and from which he can make meaning of his existence. Waldorf schools were used as an example that arts-laden curriculum is effective by Eric Jensen (2002). Jensen also noted that Waldorf Schools are admired by educational notables Howard Gardner and Theodore Sizer. He points out that Waldorf students often pass achievement tests at
double or triple the rate for public school students. They routinely get accepted to high quality universities, and are well received by their college professors. In a 1994 interview, Elliot Eisner praised Waldorf education saying

Waldorf education possesses unique educational features that have considerable potential for improving public education in America. The time is ripe for public schools to explore the ways in which ideas in Waldorf education might be explored in their own settings. For too long, in my opinion, Waldorf education has been on the margins of education. It needs to receive the kind of attention it deserves. (as cited by Goral, 2009 p. 1)

Conclusion

In conclusion, for children to develop their fullest potential in life, the arts are a critical component to their education. Study of the arts with intent to improve teaching artistry is necessary and worthy. This teacher cannot afford to wait for the public school to decide that arts are important to a child’s education. Jensen stated

Most of what we can measure now, behaviorally, is neurologically immaterial to the optimal development of the brain. Often invisible, impossible to measure, [arts inclusion] makes all the difference….The fundamental question facing education today is simple: “Is our social, moral, and ethical mandate to maximize test scores or to prepare the citizens for tomorrow?” (2002, p. 114)

It is clear to this teacher that arts must become a part of daily school life.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

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 II: The art of teaching art. This researcher utilized the narrative inquiry approach to conduct her project of incorporating arts into the classroom. Cole and Knowles (2000), liken researching to teaching:

It is not important that you implement the design to get results; it is important that you attend to the process of researching so that you learn from it. Depending on the questions and issues that emerge as you engage in inquiry, sometimes you might only slightly modify your initial plan: at other times you might dramatically change it. Trust the process and trust your own judgment as teacher and researcher. If the plan is not working, then change it – just as you would in teaching. (p. 104)

Telling the story of researching is attending to its process, or understanding its experience. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), educational experience should be studied through narrative inquiry because experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry

...is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still
in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the
experiences that make up people’s lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)
The narrative story must also be placed within the context of the storyteller’s life and
work setting (Goodson, 2006). At the end of the inquiry, the process of the experience is
not left behind, but is still alive, and presents new possibilities and new directions for
continuing to develop a teacher’s artistry.

By examining this researcher’s story of experience with art and teaching, past and
present, and placing it in the context of her district, school, and classroom, she has
documented the experience of the process of improving her teaching artistry. As a result
she has discovered new aims to direct this process as her life and teaching story
continues. Because of the narrative approach to inquiry, this chapter is written from the
researcher’s perspective of first person, and consists primarily of the researcher’s journal
writings and samples of student work.

Author’s Previous Arts/Teaching Experience

My intent in this project has been to transform my teaching artistry to enhance the
students’ learning experience through use of the arts. I have felt that thoughtful
implementation of arts in the classroom would provide an emotional tie assisting the
creation of a strong sense of community among students and teacher. Students would be
able to communicate better, and would be willing to work with anyone in the classroom.
The literature is clear that arts can provide an emotional tie to required curriculum that
will help foster in students a willingness and desire to learn. I believe incorporation of the
arts has helped build confidence in risk taking and problem solving. Students who may
not shine in math or language arts, the curriculum areas currently stressed by the state, have enjoyed an opportunity to contribute to, and be appreciated by the classroom community. I have striven to create a more playful and joyous classroom, giving students plenty of reasons to want to go to school. This is a necessary goal to developing a lifelong love of learning.

Achieving the above goals has been a formidable challenge for me. I have been teaching for eight years, and my teaching style has for the most part been devoid of art in any form, except for a few projects with little purpose or relation to the curriculum. I have stepped onto a new path to develop the artistry of determining art forms that will be useful to my goals, and necessarily have been required to develop the artistry of successful deliverance of arts incorporation.

When I examined my own childhood and educational experience, I realized that the project I have undertaken is leading me back to an enjoyment of art that I had lost. I used to draw constantly when I was young, and enjoyed my middle school art class with a teacher that was always very encouraging. Subsequently, I took a speech/theater class in eighth grade with a teacher so critical, that I was forever terrified of having to do anything in front of an audience again. I never considered enrolling in a theater class again. Compounding this negativity, I took a beginning art class my freshman year in high school with a similar experience. I came away from that class convinced I did not have any talent, and did not wish to expose myself to any further criticism. In addition, at home I was encouraged to follow an educational path that would prepare me for a good job. It seemed time to put art aside.
It has been inspiring to read literature delineating the value of art in providing an aesthetic experience to students on their educational journey. To discover that brain research provides evidence that arts help develop several aspects of the brain, and to witness a teaching pedagogy that embraces the arts has given me a sense of relief about my youthful enjoyment of art. However, I also feel a sense of loss because my experiences with some teachers and lack of encouragement from others caused me to abandon my personal expression through art.

Although there are state standards for the arts, little emphasis was placed on them in my credential program. The courses I have taken in this Master’s program have opened my eyes to a new journey I feel compelled to take. I have begun to learn how to use the arts to enhance student aesthetics, and am determined to make this a positive experience for them.

I have kept a journal of my aesthetic experience of incorporating the arts into the classroom. There were two focus areas of arts incorporation into the class schedule. One area of focus was activities during community time. The other was arts incorporation into the curriculum. The journal consists of a recount of the activity followed by discussion of what parts of the presentation were successful, and where improvement was needed. I recorded the steps I took to improve the artistry of deliverance, and my observations of how the activity affected the students. The students assembled a journal of their arts based learning activities, and I kept samples of work by students, and samples of science tests that followed science based art activities. I also recorded and reflected on evidence that students enjoyed arts enriched learning.
Context of Research Project

This project was conducted at Larchmont Elementary School in the Twin Rivers Unified School District of Sacramento, California. The district was established July 1, 2008, and is in its second year of operation. It is a large district, encompassing 120 square miles, and was formed by merging several former districts, including the Rio Linda Union School District at which this researcher was formerly employed. She previously was a fourth grade teacher for eight years at Hillsdale Elementary School in North Highlands, about five miles from her current place of work. Unlike her former elementary school district, Twin Rivers includes preschool through high school grades serving approximately 27,000 students.

California’s state government is currently in fiscal crisis, currently billions of dollars in debt. This budget crisis has negatively affected schools across the state. Last year there were massive teacher layoffs and educational programs were slashed throughout California. In our district, as in others, administrative decisions were made to increase class size in primary grades in order to reduce teaching staff. Although this teacher had eight years of teaching experience at Hillsdale School, she was the lowest in seniority. Therefore, this researcher had to leave Hillsdale School to go to another school to replace a teacher that was laid off due to lower seniority. In addition, column salary increases were temporarily frozen, and furlough days were set in place for the following school year to reduce teacher income. It has been a very emotional, uncertain and stressful time for this teacher and teachers in general. This teacher did not know at which school or grade she would be placed until near the end of the school year, and even that
could have changed at any time. This researcher was also in the middle of her master’s program. She knew she would need to decide on a project that would be flexible enough to take to an unknown new assignment.

Arts in schools were negatively affected when Rio Linda Union School District disbanded the elementary school music department several years earlier. The Visual and Performing Arts Department was terminated for the next school year by Twin Rivers School District. The district does have a kindergarten through eighth grade charter school called Creative Connections Academy located in North Highlands to which students can apply. This school provides education in the varied arts fields.

The elementary schools from the previous Rio Linda School district have a half hour Friday Sing each week in their cafeteria. Students assemble in the cafeteria or multi-purpose room. Popular children’s songs are integrated with current uplifting or motivational songs and patriotic songs. Words to songs are displayed on a screen, children are encouraged to sing along, and often are allowed to move rhythmically with the music. There is no music instruction. This time is also used for school announcements. Any further exposure to the arts for students now falls squarely on the teacher.

This teacher has begun her first year at Larchmont Elementary. She and the other new fifth grade teacher at Larchmont have not taught this grade before. Larchmont Elementary School’s student population is about 325 students attending grades kindergarten through sixth grade. The school is situated in a single family home lower-middle class neighborhood. The school population is diverse: 17.1 percent African
American, 31.2 percent Caucasian, and 45.4 percent Hispanic or Latino. Students are required to wear uniform clothing colored blue or white in any combination. This includes blue jeans. Approximately 92 percent of students receive free or reduced fee lunch.

Additionally, the school did not meet its AYP, or Adequate Yearly Progress growth goal mandated by the NCLB legislation for the 2008-2009 school year, and so Larchmont is in the first year of program improvement. The district has a series of “learning coaches” who are trained to assist staff in improving school performance. Larchmont teachers attend staff meetings every Wednesday morning for an hour. Most of the meeting time is utilized by the learning coach. Teachers are led in exercises designed to help them deliver language arts and math standards to the majority of students in their classroom. Emphasis is placed on study of these standards, teaching strategies, and review of school test data in math and language arts. The district has implemented a new math program requiring 75 minutes minimum of math instruction daily. There is frequent testing in math and language arts, and testing must be completed by a strict schedule. Data is recorded in a district-wide computer run measures program and reviewed by the principal. The school has a data wall where progress in language arts and math is monitored for each student. Teachers receive 40 minutes of prep time each week. No grade level collaboration time has been given since the first few months of school.

The administration will be increasing class size in all classes again in the next school year, resulting in further teacher layoffs. Teachers have also been told to expect more furlough days to be added to the next teaching year. Finally, the administration has
been considering closing some schools in the district, and Larchmont is one of them because it is so small. As can be imagined, teachers are under enormous daily stress due to these factors, and the threat of school closure just adds to the stress. Most teachers are operating on a survival mode, doing the best they can for their children under extremely stressful situations.

This setting is not nurturing to teachers engaged in activities that do not appear to be related to improving math and language arts standards. Staff meetings do not address student growth in any other subject areas or personal life skills.

This teacher works in a self contained classroom. There is a back door that opens to a tree shaded grassy area between buildings that is a good place for activities when the weather is nice. Art, movement and theater games also take place inside the classroom. Desks and chairs can be moved to make a circle. The class size has fluctuated from 27 students to 24 students and is now currently 25 students. There has been a fair amount of student turn over, with five students leaving and five students entering the class at various times of the school year.

Arts Enriched Community Time

The principal at the school where I teach has encouraged teachers to have a community time about three days a week. I have been using this community time to introduce music, movement, and theater arts to students for the purpose of encouraging teamwork, confidence and improving focus.

It was with great trepidation that I enrolled in the Children’s Theater class at Sacramento State University in the spring of 2009. I dreaded the thought of performing in
front of anyone; however, I was amazed to find that much of the class involved learning about acting by playing theater games! There was no criticism, no right or wrong, only discussion about activities among students, facilitated by the instructor. I could immediately see the usefulness and appeal of introducing these games in my classroom; therefore, incorporating theater games I learned in my theater class, as well as games I learned about in *Theater Games for the Classroom: a teacher’s handbook* (Spolin, 1986), was one of the important steps toward improving teaching artistry during community time.

I feel that there are excellent reasons to use theater games with my students. First, many students have little experience understanding body language, or how to express themselves. They also need to learn to be open to working in any group to which they are assigned. Theater games offer students opportunities to solve problems where there are many possible solutions. Most of their standards based testing educational experience teaches them that there is only one right answer, and they are afraid to risk creative solutions to problems, a skill equally important to academics and life’s journey. In addition, students today spend a lot of time watching television or playing video games when they are at home. They do not have much opportunity for play with other kids, and really do not know much about playing games with other children. In addition, theater games teach observation, focus, and improvisation skills. The first two skills are a benefit to learning, and all three are important life skills.

Before beginning the first theater game, I had introduced a welcome circle game that involved tossing a ball or bean bags. When I learned this game with other teachers at
the Waldorf Summer Institute, it went well and quickly progressed to more challenging levels of play. I naively started out with this game during community time early in the school year; as a result, I was made painfully aware of the challenges I would face introducing game activities to a fifth grade class of students with no such previous experience.

When introducing games, just teaching students to get into a circle is a concentration accomplishment! It has taken months for them to be able to make a decent circle on their own! I did not realize what a spatial and social challenge this would be for 10 and 11 year olds! The teacher must manage talking, behavior, and placement all at once! I have learned that it is extremely important that the teacher retain tight control to prevent activities from deteriorating into mayhem. I developed the following steps to maintain a positive working environment:

- Boys or girls make the circle first, leaving space in between for the other students to fill in. This is one way to prevent students from standing with their friends. They now monitor each other working to get the circle shape correct.

- Students can choose not to participate; therefore, students are not forced into an uncomfortable situation. Often they will choose to join in the next time we do the activity, because they have had a chance to view the activity first. I have learned there are students who are reluctant to try something they are not familiar with.
• Students are warned about misbehavior, and subsequently told to leave the circle if it continues.

• Students are motivated to follow directions because they know we only have a finite amount of time for the activity due to the day’s tight schedule. They also know that if behavior deteriorates, the activity will end, and we will move to the next item of the day on the schedule.

Because of the difficulties I had teaching the Welcome Game, I decided I would start with very simple theater games. This proved to be the correct approach. They were not experienced following simple directions in such a group activity, and many of the students are shy or reluctant to interact with other students in the class.

Zeek, Zork

The first game I introduced was Zeek Zork (CSUS THEA 118). This game promotes listening skills as well as simple verbal interaction with students next to each other. The game is simple. A player says “Zeek” to the person next to them. That person repeats “Zeek” back to them, and then turns to the person on their other side. He then tells that person, “Zork.” That person must then repeat “Zork” to that player, and then turns to the next player stating, “Zeek.” The players try to make it around the circle without a mistake. This simple game turned out to be challenging enough. After some practice, we were able to accomplish a round. We played this at subsequent community gatherings with quicker success, as students mastered repeating, and passing on to another player. I then adjusted the focus so that a student could choose whether to say Zeek or Zork to the next student, therefore requiring students to pay closer attention to the student speaking.
Zip, Zap, Zop

Now that the students and I had some confidence that they could be successful, I introduced the game, Zip, Zap, Zop (CSUS THEA 118). Again, students interacted in a circle, only by speaking a single word. The words need to be said one student per word, in order, down the line. Again I was ponderous about how difficult such seemingly simple tasks were for the students. I have learned that these games need to be repeated several times before they can be advanced to another level. After the students were able to make it around the circle more easily, I could add variations that called upon them to use their own personal experience in expressing feelings. For example, when they said their word, I challenged them to say it with joy. Another time they were to express sadness, and so on. Most students were very self conscious about doing this, so I explained to them that these were games that real actors played in order to learn how to become good actors that we could all enjoy. We talked about what it would be like to watch a movie where actors did not have expression, or if someone read a story aloud without expression. The next time we tried this game, students were much more willing to risk expression of the stated emotion; they were acting like actors! Even so, I was aware that some students did not seem to understand how to demonstrate some of the emotions, or were just not able to be demonstrative. I think this activity helped students to actually observe what these emotions look and sound like.

I discovered another exciting use of this game that related to teaching the students fluency. They had been directly instructed on the proper sentence inflection for a declarative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentence. I improvised a variation of Zip, Zap,
Zop that was excellent for practicing these inflections; afterward, students have been choral reading aloud in class with much more attention to this skill. My realization of this success was a defining moment when I knew for certain I was taking the right approach to developing my artistry! Never before in my teaching career would I have imagined students could gain so much from such a simple group interaction!

Three Changes and Mirror

I was ready to tackle a more challenging theater game called Mirror (Spolin, 1986. p. 75). In this game, students in pairs attempt to closely imitate their partner with mirror-like accuracy. The purpose for having my students play this game was to give students experience with close observation, and teamwork with another student. For me, the challenge was to sidecoach according to Spolin’s guidelines well enough to keep the students intent on the game focus. Also, I would need to follow up the game with a discussion reflecting on the activity.

In her book, Spolin (1986) recommended a warm up game called Three Changes (p.62), before playing Mirror. Thinking back to my theater class, I decided to arrange students with an inside and outside circle as we had done for some of the theater games. Boys made one circle, girls, the other. I placed students with partners at first, so they could not choose who they worked with. In keeping with Spolin’s philosophy, I joined into the game, partnering up with a student, and therefore becoming an equal at play. I learned to place myself in the outside circle, so I could monitor the progress of the activity as I sidecoached. Students loved the Three Changes game, which involved observing one’s partner closely, then facing away from each other to change three things
about one’s appearance. Partners face each other again, and try to discover the three changes. From my previous successful experience of starting with simple steps, I again decided to start simply with just one change. On subsequent opportunities to play Three Changes, we progressed to making all three changes, and rotating the outside circle, so that students played with multiple random partners.

I had explained to students that Three Changes helped them learn to look closely at something, and that this would be an important skill for Mirrors. We had a class discussion about mirrors and miming to build some background. I introduced the idea as our instructor had in theater class, by having student pairs imitate each other doing simple tasks such as brushing teeth. Students faced each other sitting cross-legged, and one of the circles was designated to be the leader, and the other circle was designated to be the follower. Eventually, the roles of the circles were switched. In subsequent game times, I had them concentrate only on hand movements, as if there were a piece of glass between them, with palms almost touching. This has been a very difficult task for them. I have demonstrated it several times with students that understand the concept. Many students do not focus on the other student’s hands, and also rush with fast movements to try to keep the other student from being able to follow them. I see the importance of sidecoaching here to keep students working on the game focus of trying to be an exact mirror with their partner. After everyone participates with a partner, one set of partner volunteers sits in the circle center. The class tries to guess which student is the leader, and which is the follower. The class is beginning to understand, and demonstrates more skill in being a good leader, and a good mirror. I have made progress on the sidecoaching
skill, although I found it very difficult to be both a player, and a coach. It is going to take continual practice to master.

What I like about participating as an equal player, is the opportunity to place myself with students with whom I feel a need to interact with on a positive level. I have different reasons for choosing these students. The games gave me the opportunity to play with students who are shy, students who have been classroom behavior challenges, students who are academically low in some areas, and students who have difficulty focusing during instruction. These students smile at me and seem to sincerely enjoy this opportunity to be my partner. Thus, I have begun to build a relationship between the students and myself!

I led students in reflection of the game upon its completion the first few times we played it. We discussed times in their life when they had imitated someone. Students told of times they had imitated someone in their family. It was interesting to me that most of these examples were of a negative behavior such as hurtful language or actions. I let them think about this fact. We explored what television, movie characters, or other famous people they emulate, and times when someone in their family such as a younger brother or sister has imitated them. This game also made it possible for students to distinguish between simply following a behavior, and exact replication of the behavior.

As I stated previously, the teacher must learn how to have firm control of the activities at all times for there to be a productive outcome. The evidence of this has become clear on many community occasions. I felt with Three Changes and Mirrors, I had more success setting ground rules for respectful, inclusive play. There have been
some problems in my class with students shunning a few of the other students in the
class. Incidents were happening on the playground, and during some physical education
activities that were becoming real problems, and feelings were getting hurt. I would hold
discussions with the students involved during my recess break where we would try to
work out these problems. I even had to ban certain playground activities for a period of
time to make my point about inclusiveness. The problem began to spill over into
community activities that involved interaction between students in some of the movement
activities. Again, feelings were getting hurt, and I had to remove some students from the
activity. I think this problem is related to the age of fifth graders, and may not be such an
issue with lower grades. It has really caught me off guard. I remembered a class I
attended on theater games at the Sacramento Arts Faire last spring. The instructor, a high
school drama and English instructor, was talking about the term, “blocking,” which is a
behavior of negativity during theater games. He explained that he taught his high school
students the term, and that he made it clear that they needed to have a positive and open
attitude to play the games. I decided I needed to do this with my fifth-graders also. I
explained about blocking, and that if they wanted to join in community games, they must
come willing to participate in whatever was presented. In addition, they must be willing
to work with whomever they ended up with as a partner in an activity. If they could not
decide to abide by this, then they should not join in the circle that day. Another problem
I addressed was not laughing at a student because of who their partner ended up being.
We often review these rules, to help them remember to come with an open, positive
attitude. I have them tell me the rules. I have had a few students choose to sit out, but
eventually they could no longer resist wanting to be a part of the game. I have since had one incident of a student that in the middle of a game decided to sit down because she did not want to work with the next partner she would have. I explained that this was unacceptable; if she was going to be selective, she needed to decide not to come to circle at the beginning. I have not had this happen again. Since the participation discussion, I hear students reminding each other that they cannot choose who they are with. These rules have made for a very successful class experience with Three Changes and Mirrors, and I am proud that the students are learning to work with each other. I am also seeing a difference in how students are treating each other in class. Although some students are still not readily accepted at all times, most students now accept working with these students in the classroom setting without complaint.

I feel the students are privileged to have the opportunity to participate in theater games and learn the skills they have to offer. I have been made acutely aware that the success of their aesthetic experience relies on developing my artistic skill in orchestrating the games. As C. S. Lewis once said, “Experience is a brutal teacher— but you learn – by God you learn.”

Arts Enriched Curriculum Inspired by Waldorf Pedagogy

This summer I attended the Waldorf Institute for Public Educators, a two week lecture and hands on course familiarizing public school teachers with Waldorf educational philosophy and practice. I found the course to be inspiring, and it instilled within me a desire to take back to my classroom the physical and emotional involvement imparted in a Waldorf education rich with arts.
Music

One area of the arts I was exposed to at the institute was music. Each morning we were instructed in music as a group for forty-five minutes. We did warm up exercises, and learned to sing a repertoire of songs that challenged us to follow tempo, pitch, soprano, tenor and alto parts as well as rounds. In my youth, I took piano lessons, and participated in a church choir. However, I have not had formal training in how to teach music. My experience singing at the Waldorf Summer Institute reminded me of the joy of singing. Larchmont School, as well as other schools in the district has a half hour all school sing time usually on Fridays. All of the classes assemble in the cafeteria to sing along with songs played over the speakers. The words are displayed up front on a large screen. These songs range from popular children’s songs to inspiring current popular music. Students sit with their class on the floor, and can choose whether or not they wish to sing along. At our school, the sing time also allows for individuals or groups to get up on stage to sing something.

I wanted children to experience more than this, and our district has cut music teachers and music classes in elementary school as a means of adjusting its dwindling budget. Although I did not have the skills to teach music formally, I focused on presenting a challenging group experience to help them understand about rhythm, pacing, and teamwork in a singing group. I wanted to let them experience the joy of singing, and the reverence that can also be inspired by music and being a part of a group that makes music. My goal was to teach increasingly more difficult songs, and be able to turn over leadership of the songs to some of the students. I did not realize just how simple I would
need to start out, nor how much resistance I would meet with trying to get fifth-graders to sing as a group.

Many of the students did not wish to sing at all, and many were very self-conscious about singing. I myself was nervous and self-conscious, not having done much singing with students. I knew I would need to be the actor, and act like I knew what I was doing! I had my own fears to overcome! I was sure I possessed no golden voice!

Partly due to my own fear, I started out by introducing the chant, “How Much Wood Could a Woodchuck Chuck,” which we had learned in the break-out classes for intermediate grades at the Waldorf Institute. Our instructor, Rev Bowen, taught us the chant, with a hand clapping, knee slapping, and finger snapping routine. It was a good choice. Many students were challenged to keep the same rhythm going with the words and motions. I introduced it slowly with a few lines each time, having them repeat after me. This activity really helped them to understand how important it was to work at staying together. They loved knowing how to do this routine. I had hopes of teaching them to do it as a round, but this proved too challenging to take on so early in our limited experience. They were not able to concentrate on their separate parts all the way through. I was, however, able to let some students lead the activity. It gave one student that has often been a behavior problem a chance to lead. He had good enough rhythm, and paired with another student, they could lead the class through increasingly faster verses. The students wanted to perform it at Friday Sing! I told them we needed to practice until we knew it really well, and they were enthusiastic. Some students were afraid to do it, and I told them they did not have to. When the moment came, I was amazed that the entire
class chose to participate! I helped them get organized on the stage, and then hung back. I let the two leader students take over, and the class performed beautifully! Everyone in the audience clapped for them. Later, back in the classroom, we talked about what it felt like to have the audience cheer. This experience gave them a very real emotional identification to an anthology we had read together titled, “La Bamba” about a boy who wanted to sing a song in his school’s talent show.

From this success I launched the song, “Bottles of Pop.” This song has three parts, and for this class proved too challenging at this time. Instead, I started with a very simple song Rev taught us for beginning the school day. “Morning has come, Night is away, Rise with the Sun, and Welcome the Day.” With new wisdom, I just taught a little at a time. At first, only a few students would choose to sing. As the words and tune became more familiar, more students joined in. I have learned that I need to sound very confident, and just put the song out there without any hesitation. My confidence inspires them to try. My class can now sing this song in a two part round, and on one particular day, we all really noticed how wonderful it sounded. Their faces lit up with the realization of what they had done!

“Ms. Brunson,” the students say, “We want to sing this song at Friday Sing!” I have told them we can learn something even better, and we have begun to learn a Native American Song, “Rise, Arise,” that I learned during the Waldorf music class. This too, has taken a long time for most students to feel comfortable enough to join in. They are currently feeling more confident about the tune and words, and have recently attempted
to sing it as a round. I am confident we will be successful with student enthusiasm and practice.

Another singing and movement approach I have begun to study is the Education Through Music program, and I have introduced a few of the simpler activities I have been learning to the class. One of the movement activities is done to the song, “Scotland’s Burning.” After we had done the activity at several community circles, I split the circle in two and started one group off singing the song, and had the other half join in a round. They caught on immediately, and knew that they had done something great! The teaching coach had stepped into the room during the activity, and she told the class how great they sounded. Later that day she mentioned to me that she was very impressed they could do that, and how sad it was that there was no longer a music program in the district.

Fostering Desire to Learn Through Arts Based Will and Emotional Engagement

The Waldorf pedagogy involves introducing concepts to students first through the will, and then by development of an emotional engagement before delving further into the intellect. Involving the will and emotions opens up the student’s mind to create a desire to receive further instruction. Waldorf students prepare their own journals rich with visual art that demonstrate the knowledge they have acquired. They make their own learning visible.

Science

I love science. I graduated from college with a Bachelor of Arts in Biology. One of the challenges about teaching fifth grade that I was looking forward to was being successful with science instruction. Science curriculum is one section of the state
standards testing in fifth grade. Students are tested on a combination of the fourth and fifth grade standards.

Physical Science

After a futile attempt to teach the first physical science lesson from the text alone, accompanied by an experiment that in my mind made little connection to the concepts the fifth graders needed to master, I decided to design Waldorf inspired instruction to introduce the science curriculum first through the will and then emotional engagement by using movement and visual art activities.

I have observed that many of my students still think concretely. Most students were not able to understand abstract concepts such as atoms, molecules, elements and compounds. How could I improve my teaching artistry to get these concepts across to such students as required by the fifth grade curriculum?

The first goal was to conceptualize an atom through will. I gave students cards labeled P for proton, N for neutron, and E for electron. Students stood before the class to make a nucleus of protons and neutron students. Electron students then circled around the nucleus. Next year, I would like to improve this into a circle activity that involves all students. To invoke feeling, students were instructed to choose any element they were interested in from the Periodic Table. They drew a diagram of the element’s atom showing its nucleus and electrons. They wrote a paragraph explaining the atom’s components and placement on the Periodic Table. They also explained why they chose the element (See Figure 1). The instructions for this project are located in Appendix A.
Students also needed to be able to differentiate between atoms, elements, molecules and compounds. I decided students would make clay models of elements and compounds, invoking the will. Different colors and sizes of clay represented different
element atoms of hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. Using toothpicks, we joined two atoms (colored clay balls) of hydrogen, and also two atoms of the other elements, to make their molecules. Each of these elements has a molecule made of two atoms. Including the use of another colored ball to represent carbon, I then demonstrated how to make simple compound models from the clay balls. We made models of water (H2O), methane (CH4), and carbon dioxide (CO2). Use of the clay medium proved distracting for many students. I had to monitor closely to keep students on task. Students wanted to make other things with the clay, and I even had trouble with students trying to keep clay when the activity was finished. I think this problem could be avoided by giving students an opportunity to play with clay during another time, when they can have freedom to explore the medium.

The next day, when I checked for understanding using individual white board response, I discovered most students still did not understand the relationship between atoms, molecules, elements, and compounds! I felt upset, because I was sure the activity would have made the relationships clear. I took a moment to talk to the students about my feelings, explaining to them that I was trying to make learning the science more fun and easier to understand. I told them I had put a lot of time into designing the activity. Further, I asked them if they liked the activity, and got a resounding yes. So I told them that they needed to show me that they were using the activity to learn about science, not just to play around and be social with other students. I asked them if they would rather only read the lesson in the book, or if they preferred having activities to do. It was unanimous that only reading the book was not their choice!
After the discussion, I used different colored markers on the white board to represent different kinds of atoms and re-taught the lesson. Students used their personal white boards to respond to my questions concerning atoms and different types of molecules. The class was much quieter, and focused on demonstrating what they were learning. I believe they wanted to show me that they wanted more activities.

Next year I will first discuss with students that I teach science using lots of activities to help them understand what we read in the science book. I will explain that it is important for them to be conscious of what they need to understand from the activity, and be able to demonstrate that they have learned the concepts. I will provide a recording sheet for them to draw the models and explain the concept. The recording sheet would be a way to bring in their feelings. It may be that I was expecting them to grasp too many concepts in one activity, and that it needs to be separated into smaller chunks. This is a struggle concerning the teaching pacing. We are expected to present so much information to them in such a short amount of time! I feel challenged to redesign this lesson for next year so that it will be more effective. I know just reading the text is definitely not effective for the majority of the students.

For a review before the test, I gave each student a three by five card with an N for nitrogen, H for hydrogen, or O for oxygen on it. I had the correct number of each card so that all students would be able to participate. We stepped outside our classroom and stood under the oak trees outside. I instructed students to find the person they needed to make either an element of nitrogen, hydrogen, or the compound, water. Students thoughtfully made a good effort to make their molecules. I felt I had made a step in the
right direction. I was encouraged by the students’ enjoyment of the activities, and felt challenged to continue developing my artistry of effective deliverance.

The next lesson introduced the three states of matter: solid, liquid, and gas. Students would need to be able to understand how molecules could change from one state to the other, and these terms: evaporation, condensation, and sublimation. I wanted to introduce the concept first through the will, and designed an outdoor movement and imagination activity to help students internalize and understand how the molecules moved in each state. I directed students to stand in one box of a four square game, lined up in rows and columns. The space was very small so they were close together. I told the students to imagine they were each a molecule of frozen water, or ice. I explained to them that because they were in a solid state, they had to remain fixed at their spot, and could only move by pivoting around a fixed foot. I told them to notice how close together they were, and how they were arranged in rows and columns. I told them they were an ice cube in a pot on a stove, and that the pot was the size of two of the small squares. I pretended to turn on the heat, and told them they would become warmer, and eventually be warm enough to be able to break loose from their fixed location to slowly slide past other molecules. They could now move around the pot like a liquid molecule, filling the pot’s shape. Next, I stated they would be cooled down in the freezer. I coached them to move more slowly and to return to the small square. Finally, there were arranged back into their beginning rows and columns representing the solid state of matter.

Before the activity we had previewed the text lesson. I reminded students that it was important to focus on the science concept they needed to learn during the activity. I
constantly monitored their behavior, similar to the theater game sidecoaching, to keep
them focused. I also had decided to just teach the transformation from solid to liquid and
liquid to solid. After the activity, I checked for understanding with answers on their
personal white boards. We were making progress!

The second day we repeated the previous day’s science activity. I then introduced
how molecules move in the gaseous state by telling them I would be adding even more
heat to the pot and as they became warmer, they would move faster and faster until they
could escape from the pot and move around the “room.” The room was the entire four
square court. The increased activity stretched their ability to stay focused, but I used
sidecoaching to keep tight control. Subsequent checking for understanding was
successful. In the next few days we practiced the different states, and they became very
good at knowing how to move.

One part of the concept of the states of matter was proving extremely difficult for
them to understand. This was the fact that a liquid always takes the shape of its container,
but the amount of the liquid is not altered even if the shape of the container changes. I
decided to demonstrate this to them using 50 ml of water in a graduated cylinder. I
poured it into a beaker, and also into an Erlenmeyer flask. Most students thought there
was more water in the graduated cylinder. I then showed them the 50 ml marks on the
beaker and Erlenmeyer flask. Then I poured the water back into the graduated cylinder to
show them it still measured 50 ml. They found this hard to believe, but the
demonstration helped them accept the concept. This could become another class activity,
but there is never enough time!
Students found it difficult to remember the correct term that went with the correct change of state. I planned a drawing activity to bring emotional involvement into the concepts of evaporation, condensation, and sublimation. We folded a piece of blank paper into three equal sections, one for each change of state. We would complete one section each day for each change of state term.

Students used colored pencils and copied as I filled in the first section. We labeled it “Evaporation” at the top. We drew a pond of water, with some grass around it. We drew a sun in the sky, and wavy blue lines with arrows from the pond into the atmosphere. I talked about what the picture represented. Across from the pond toward the right side of the paper, we drew a pot on a stove with the same wavy blue lines going into the air. They could connect this to our will activity we had done previously. I explained how this was related to evaporation in a pond. Some students complained that they could not draw. Others were ecstatic to have a chance to do so. I kept my drawings simple enough so those students with limited drawing ability would be able to make a successful diagram. I encouraged them to try different colors, and told them not to worry if their picture is not exactly like mine. “Everyone’s art looks different, and in art there is no right or wrong way!” I proclaimed. I looked out over a classroom of intently focused students bent over their sketches. At the bottom of this section we wrote the definition of evaporation.

On the second day of this lesson, I took a couple of soda cans and bottles out of my mini refrigerator. I had students feel them. We agreed they felt cold but dry. I let the cans and bottles sit out on my table while we finished the language arts lesson. The
students were wondering what I was doing! Now that it was time for science, I asked the students to feel the cans again. They discovered the cans were now wet! I wanted this to be a discovery activity, which is more the way science is presented in a Waldorf School. So I let the students explain how they thought the cans got wet. Most of the students thought the wetness came from the liquid inside the containers. However, I asked them if the level of the liquid inside the bottles had changed, and the class responded that the level had not changed. They agreed nothing was leaking out. I encouraged them to think about their playground activity, when water vapor escaped from the pot into the atmosphere. I reminded them that there were water vapor molecules in the air in our classroom. After much discussion among students, one student finally offered that the can was cool, so the vapor in the air changed to a liquid!

With this revelation, we returned to our change of state drawing we had begun. The middle section was labeled, Condensation. We drew the pond again. In the sky we put a gray cloud with a lightning bolt. We drew rain drops descending to the pond. On the right we drew a refrigerator with an open door. We drew a table with a soda can sitting on it. We added water drops to the soda can, and we discussed how both pictures represented condensation. Underneath our drawings we wrote the definition of condensation. Again, students were genuinely engaged in their artwork. They liked using colored pencils, and some students really showed artistry and imagination in their work.

For the last section of the lesson, I brought dry ice to school to demonstrate sublimation. Students observed that over time, the ice got smaller, but did not turn into a liquid. I also explained that dry ice is the solid state of carbon dioxide. We drew the
final section of our science diagram with a picture of dry ice with wavy lines pointing directly into the air. This section was labeled “Sublimation” and had its definition at the bottom of the drawings. (See Figure 2.)

![Figure 2. Student representation of the three states of matter.](image)

These Waldorf style activities provided a foundation for the students to understand the concepts well enough to be able to participate in small group skits demonstrating states of matter to the rest of the class. With some coaching, they were even able to perform a skit demonstrating condensation of water vapor onto a soda can. One person represented the can, and other students represented the water vapor molecules. I allowed them to refer to the diagram they worked so hard on during the test.
I felt this would be an incentive to continue to produce quality work on science related art.

Life Science

Unit B of our Science curriculum teaches concepts about multi-cellular organisms, their tissues, organs and organ systems. Although the text teaches about plants in the third and fourth lessons, I decided that students could be more emotionally involved with plants when being introduced to the concepts of cells and organs. The first lesson of the text began with the smallest unit of life; the cell. Conversely, Waldorf pedagogy moves from the whole to parts; therefore it made more sense to look at the whole plant, and then discover its organs and their functions. I wanted to start with a will activity of walking around the campus and observing the different kinds of plant life, from small plants to trees; however the weather was uncooperative. It had been raining for a week, and another week of rain was predicted. Instead, I bought a Gerber daisy plant, and a tulip plant for the class to observe. Students admired the plants, and discussed what they knew about plants. We talked about what the purpose of the different plant parts might be. I was amazed to learn that many students did not know that the purpose of a flower was to be able to produce seeds so the plant could reproduce. They had only thought that the purpose of flowers were to look pretty and smell nice for them.

I wanted them to feel the beauty of plants, and develop a reverence and awe of their unique qualities. I brought in a book on North American plants that had belonged to my grandfather. It had hundreds of large, colored drawings of many of the plants of North America. Using the document camera, I shared the drawings with class. “Oos” and
“ahhs” erupted from the room, and I knew I was making a connection! I showed them one of the illustrations similar to the Gerber daisy, and we agreed to make our own drawing. I showed them how to practice making some of the curves we would need for the petals. We discussed how big the plant should be on the paper. I explained that we wanted to use all the space available. We started with the flower, and as with the previous diagram, they followed my drawing that I was doing under the document camera, so they could all see it on the board. Even the boys were engrossed. We concentrated on a different part of the plant over several days. We labeled each organ and its function (See Figure 3 for a student sample). Students read certain portions of the text that explained about two kinds of root systems, and also about how water and food travel through the plant in tissues called xylem and phloem.

Students were then ready for a directed inquiry activity in the text to make sense. They put celery stalks in blue colored water. The next day, students noticed blue coloring in the leaves, and when we cut a cross-section of the stem, they found blue circles. Students were immediately able to connect that the circles were the xylem tubes, and that they carried the blue water up the stem to the leaves! I did not have to explain this to them. They were talking to each other about their observations and their inferences from them! the blue water up the stem to the leaves! I did not have to explain this to them. They were talking to each other about their observations and what they thought!

Before continuing, I want to comment on the plant inquiry cited above. Before students performed the inquiry, we had community time. We played Three Changes. I explained the reason we would play it that time was so they could sharpen the
observation skills they would need to look closely at the science activity. I explained that part of being a scientist is observing experiments carefully, and recording what is observed. Students appeared focused and ready for the science inquiry. Most students were able to follow directions and remained on task. What a repertoire of activities I am accumulating, with such diverse opportunities!

Figure 3. Student colored pencil drawing of the plant organs
To help students organize and access all this new information, we used our plant drawing and information we had read in the text to make a table of plant organs and their functions. (See Figure 4 for a student sample). When I checked for understanding of the content, having students use the table, I realized that the students needed additional guidance on how to use the table. They had fun using colored pencils to make the table, but were not good at locating information from it. I am continually made aware of how infantile their study skills are in fifth grade. Teaching them how to use the information they have lovingly created is crucial. I do believe they have much more incentive to do so with their own creations.

Figure 4. Student table of plant organ systems and their functions in colored pencil
Students were emotionally involved in the wonder of plants; as a result, they could truly appreciate how amazing it is that only plants can make their own food, and that in the photosynthesis process, they give off the oxygen humans and animals need to breathe. They realized that we could not exist without plants. I kept the plants in the classroom during the weeks of study, and we cared for them to keep them healthy.

It was time to introduce the smallest building block of life for plants and animals. The plant drawing was so successful in capturing student emotions that we drew a diagram of an animal cell. We drew the important components of it and labeled what they do. I taught them how to refer to the drawing to find information about the cell parts.

*Figure 5.* Student colored pencil representation of an animal cell.
I explained how someone at home could use it to quiz them to prepare for a test. The students were very willing to make the drawing, and were demonstrating a better understanding of using the space on the page for the drawing. They would hold up their drawing and ask, “Is this the right size?” Figure 5 shows an example of a student’s colored pencil cell drawing. Students then compared their animal cell drawing to a diagram in the book of a plant cell. We made a Venn diagram to learn how the cells were alike, and what components made them different.

The next chapter of the book will introduce students to human organ systems. There are three major organ systems in the human body that students will study. Their emotional investment in learning about plant organ systems and cells will provide a desire to compare plant organ systems to the systems of their own bodies.

Responding to Literature

Waldorf instructors use rich storytelling of myths and legends appropriate for the different stages of child development. Much of the curriculum students learn is related back to these stories, creating a thematic, cross-curricular approach. Because students become emotionally engaged in the story, they are also emotionally more willing to consider other curricular concepts that have been tied to the story. During the summer institute, one method Rev used to invoke our emotional attachment to the myths he told was through art. We made beeswax crayon drawings and watercolor pictures of scenes from the stories. For example, we painted a watercolor of a myth he told about Buddha’s wisdom. These were directed drawings and paintings. At first, I could not control the color on the paper at all. It would bleed everywhere, and my pictures just looked like
blobs of color. When we would tell him about our problems, he would then give advice on how to improve our effort. He never criticized, or told anyone what they should or should not do. I was so motivated that I took extra art classes in the evening; one for crayon drawing, and one for water coloring. By the end of the institute, I could make a decent painting!

I wanted to use this technique to enable students to form emotional attachment to the fifth grade anthology stories. I did not feel confident enough to instruct an art activity using watercolors since I could barely manage that medium on my own. I stuck to crayons, pastels, and colored pencils. The first anthology was titled, “The Pumpkin Box.” It was about two boys who find a box buried in a vacant lot by their house. The box had been buried many years ago with items in it that meant something to the person who buried it. Like Rev at Waldorf, I put a large piece of paper on the white board and drew a

*Figure 6. Student crayon drawing of the pumpkin box.*
box with pumpkins on it. I drew some of the items the boys found inside the box. The story was a read aloud, so there were no pictures to look at. The box and its contents were what we imagined. The next day, the students wrote a paragraph about what they would put in such a box for someone to find (See Figure 6 for student drawing of the Pumpkin Box).

Another anthology in the first theme of the language arts program explained the devastating power of volcanoes, and informed the reader about the different types of volcanoes. The literature also mentioned the mythical god of fire. I shared with the students that I had drawn the god of fire at a class during the summer, and they wanted to see it. I showed the class the drawing the next day, and the students wanted to draw the god too. This was also a crayon drawing, and because we do not have the beeswax block crayons that are used by Waldorf students, I got a set of the large round crayons that the primary grades use from the supply room. These bigger crayons would have some of the different edges similar to the block crayons. I showed them how to use the yellow first, and draw the god to look like he was made of fire by using flame shapes, and adding orange and red. I drew with quick rough strokes, and students wanted me to slow down. I explained this drawing was not about being perfect, but about getting their feeling of fire onto the paper quickly. Some students felt better after hearing this, but there were the perfectionists that had a difficult time with something so undefined. We also made a background of blues and purples and reds. I showed them the different surfaces the crayon had for their use, and they learned that it is important to cover the entire page with color as demonstrated in Figure 7.
Although all students loved this drawing, the boys were especially engaged, perhaps because it had to do with fire! Students were making a connection to the spirituality that has existed in humans toward nature throughout history.

Students also expressed interest in the illustrations that accompanied the short story, “La Bamba,” by Gary Soto, that was mentioned previously in relation to music in the classroom. This anthology was located in the second theme of the language arts program. The drawings had simple lines and bright colors. I had some experience with pastels, and thought these types of pictures would work well with that medium. We voted on which
picture to use for our model. The students chose the illustration of the main character walking to school carrying books. I first demonstrated how pastels work, so they could see how to get the rich, solid color onto paper. Again, I modeled sketching the boy, using pencil first. I have learned that I always must take time to explain about using all the space on the paper. Many students want to make very small objects. Some realized they needed to start over because their sketch of the boy was much too small on the paper. I think this is a lack of confidence, as well as lack of experience with using space. I instructed the students to color all the sections first, leaving a small space for black between the colors. I explained we would outline with black after all the other colors so that the drawings would not be smudged with black. Students realized how much time it took to completely cover the paper with color! This project took four art sessions of about forty minutes each to complete. Many students were challenged to be sure they had outlined everything in black for the right effect. Students who wanted to do more could add the trees in the background. Some of the students became tired of the effort required to color everything in. For this reason I think pastel work should be broken into small chunks of time so students will not tire, and can remain focused. I was glad the illustration was fairly simple. Also, when I sketched in front of the class, I simplified some of it even further. Some students did not like making the drawing different, but when they realized the effort involved with pastels, they understood the purpose. Students were very proud to display their finished illustrations around the room. I was pleased they had been exposed to a new medium of art, and that they were gaining experience with using the space on the paper. The shape of the boy was also pretty good; I know
many of them did not think they could draw a person so well (See Figure 8).

Figure 8. Student oil pastel of “La Bamba” character.
Summary

I have progressed in the ability to present, manage, and help students reflect on theater game activities. As I developed more courage and skill introducing and sidecoaching the activities, the games proved effective in getting students to learn to work and play together. Students learned to be willing to try something new and treat each other with improved respect. Students looked forward to the scheduled community time when the games were played. I also discovered ways theater games could be adapted to strengthen curriculum concepts.

Together, students and I developed the courage to experiment with singing. Because I have begun to develop this component of teaching artistry, students are more willing to learn a song, and want to master singing it as a round. Instead of thinking of music just as a sing along, they are proud of songs they learn, and many like having a leadership role in leading the singing. Others want to share the music in front of other students. Some students have truly appreciated the opportunity to sing at school, and so I have brought them joy. I have gained more courage teaching music as I witnessed their enjoyment.

Influenced by Waldorf pedagogy, I experimented with teaching curriculum by engaging students’ will and emotions. Through classroom discussion, students demonstrated personal connection to literature from their arts experiences.

Organizing science instruction from the Waldorf perspective that children should learn about the whole before it is broken into its parts proved effective. On science tests most students demonstrated understanding of key concepts otherwise difficult to grasp at
their development stage. For an example of a science quiz see Appendix B. Appendix C is a graph of average science quiz scores before and during this project.

I learned that successful arts based instruction requires rigorous management of activities on the teacher’s part. To lead, the teacher is the director, and also must be an actor, constantly improvising to ensure an activity’s success. With practice, this portion of artistry does improve, producing the desired instruction effectiveness.

When teachers use the arts to facilitate delivery of curriculum, it is imperative that students understand the purpose of the activity, and that the teacher hold them accountable for the learning objective. Students were more willing to take on this responsibility to learn when arts were part of the educational process. Students genuinely enjoyed the arts in which they participated. One could easily give up when beginning to transform to arts based instruction; it is a challenge that holds countless unseen pitfalls. However, it has given me an aesthetic experience that has motivated me to continue finding ways to bring the power of the arts to the students.
Chapter 4

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The California educational system in response to NCLB federal legislation has narrowed its focus to student performance on standardized tests that have multiple choice answers in the subjects of math and language arts. Even though research supports the importance of other forms of representation of learning for proper brain development, these learning forms are for the most part ignored because they are not recognized as being of value in a modern world education. This stripped down curriculum model feels oppressive to many teachers and students alike. The Arts in Education Master’s degree cohort at California State University, Sacramento gave candidates the opportunity to explore and discover the relevance and power of art in education. The form of narrative research gave this teacher an opportunity to reflect on and evaluate her progress incorporating arts into her classroom with the intent to develop teaching artistry. She recognized the importance of taking risks in activities with which she was inexperienced, to accomplish artistic teaching. As a result of her journey the author now views curriculum delivery as well as community development with an eye toward the arts; thus she is transforming her teaching style with creativity and joy.

The author’s narrative is a witness to art’s ability to engage a diverse population of students. While developing her artistry, this teacher recorded observations demonstrating students improved willingness to work with other students, and increased desire to become involved in the experience of learning. Her observations documented the pride students had in their accomplishments, and an improved openness to risk.
participation in a challenging and fun experience. This researcher overcame many challenges in order to accomplish her goal, but through reflection she knows it was well worth the effort. This teacher’s work can serve as testimonial to the rewards arts based learning brings to the classroom. In today’s educational climate, students from this Master’s program accept responsibility to advocate for arts inclusion in education. Arts cannot be measured on a multiple-choice test. Objective evaluation of art in education would need to take different forms. However, this teacher is on the narrative path to discover the varied ways arts contribute to joyous education. She has learned that arts keep students interested in school. Not all students like language arts and math, and many children struggle to become proficient in these subjects. Many students drop out of school by the time they get to high school. What will they then learn? This teacher’s research shares her experience of how the arts engaged her students, fostering steps toward the desire to learn and become life-long learners.

This narrative research renewed in this teacher her commitment to teaching during an oppressive and stressful teaching era. She discovered in herself a growing ability to creatively approach instruction. She found herself recognizing the endless possible ways to incorporate arts. Her creativity has expanded through purposeful effort. It is her hope to inspire other teachers to begin their own narrative research to renew their teaching vitality. Arts incorporation has little support from district administrators accountable for test scores and budget cuts. But teachers can work together to share their arts abilities and strategies for classroom use. They can encourage each other during this
stressful educational climate. It is this teacher’s hope to be able to share her new skills with other teachers at her school and in the district.

This teacher plans to continue arts related coursework useful to her teaching artistry development. She intends to continue her study of Education Through Music. This program not only teaches music and movement activities that prepare students to learn, it also teaches educators how to introduce the activities effectively and remain in control. Additionally, she plans to enroll in some visual arts classes to develop her ability to teach the Visual and Performing Arts Standards. As this researcher’s arts knowledge base grows, she will become equipped to teach effectively art for art’s sake.

It is uncertain whether she will continue to teach at Larchmont next year, and whether she will continue to teach fifth grade. However, it is certain that she is developing an artistry that will invigorate her pedagogy and engage the students at any grade level. For her vision of education, arts in the classroom is the moral and ethical choice. This researcher’s quest to bring the power of arts to the classroom has created in her a renewed lifelong desire to learn.
APPENDIX A

Student Instruction Sheet for Figure 1 Activity

My Favorite Element

1. Choose an element from the periodic table on pg. 14 with an atomic number higher than 4 but less than 20.

2. Write a paragraph that tells the following information about your element. Each bullet below should be one complete sentence. The final bullet tells you what to draw.

   • The name of the element
   • The symbol for your element
   • The atomic number of your element
   • Tell the column number your element is in
   • Give the name of another element that has similar properties because it is in the same column as your element.
   • Tell whether your element is a metal, metalloid, or a nonmetal, and how you know (what color is its square?).
   • Using colored pencils draw a picture of what an atom of this element looks like. It should have the correct number of protons, neutrons, and electrons. Use a different color for the protons, neutrons, and electrons.

This page will go into a learning journal we are making.
APPENDIX B

Sample of a Fifth Grade Science Quiz

This quiz assessed the plant vascular system standards.

[Image of a quiz page with matching, true/false, and applying concepts questions]
APPENDIX C

Science Quiz Average Scores Graph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quiz Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Arts Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/3/09</td>
<td>Composition of Matter</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/23/09</td>
<td>Compounds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/09</td>
<td>States of Matter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/14/09</td>
<td>Chemical Reactions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28/10</td>
<td>Plant Vascular System</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3/10</td>
<td>Cell Functions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quiz scores improved when teaching artistry incorporated the arts.
REFERENCES


