The Heart and the Journey: Case Studies of Collaboration for Arts Integrated Curricula

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The purpose of this article is to begin to articulate a model for collaborative arts integration curricula that honor the value of creative and critical thinking in the arts. This work is intended to extend the work of such writers as Liora Bresler, Nick Rabkin and Robin Redmond, and Larry Scripp, all of whom have provided studies to examine and categorize how arts are integrated into curricula. From these researchers (and others) we have learned that arts integration can be a powerful force in children’s lives and learning. Arts-integrated curricula can provide meaningful and powerful learning experiences for students of all ages and capabilities. Unfortunately, when arts integration is poorly organized and implemented the results may be less powerful and can be frustrating to teachers.

There has been little research on the ways that the more positive and powerful curricula are developed and implemented; neither the collaborative relationships nor the influences external to the teaching partnerships have been documented in depth to learn how such programs can be developed and maintained. This paper presents both challenges and possibilities in collaborations between arts and nonarts organizations and teachers by examining the process of curriculum development in two case studies.

In this study, two collaborative programs were examined to see what made the partnerships work. The initial guiding questions for this study were “What is the nature of the curricula that develops through the partnerships?” “What is the process of collaboration between the arts-teachers and the on-arts teachers?” and topical queries that helped shape initial interviews and data collection. These were inquiries about the choices of partners and program participants, the participants’ beliefs about what should be learned and how, the stakes of the participants and organizations, the developing relationships, teaching strategies used in the classroom, student responses to the experience, and how the programs themselves determined whether the collaborations were successful.

A grounded theory approach was used to take the rich data collected from observations, interviews, and artifacts to discover patterns in the interactions between organizations, teachers, students, and instructional content. The purpose of grounded theory research is to use discoveries from data to generate theories that explain “how” and “why” in a meaningful context, rather than to situate data within the context of known theories. Where previous writing has often focused on the products of curricular partnerships and on models of curricular content to show how teachers can design arts integration curricula, this article examines the process of collaboration, the “how” and “why” the partnerships worked as they did.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was the result of my involvement as a teacher in one program and an invitation I received to observe and assist the arts organization in the other. The study was the result of my involvement with both programs. I was asked to serve as a consultant for the theater company in Program One, and worked as an arts faculty member for Program Two. Data sources for the case studies included interviews with teachers, architects, and students, field notes from planning meetings and observed lessons, transcripts of lessons, correspondence with the participants, and student work. Additionally, I kept a journal with impressions during observations to reserve my perspective and impressions, and analytical memos and diagrams of evolving patterns were kept alongside the field notes, interviews, and journals as a tool to make sense of each new piece of data and keep a record of the progressing analysis.

The following narratives provide an introduction to the two cases to provide rich information and support the subsequent analysis. The narratives describe the context and characteristics of the par-
participants and the curriculum, the motivating forces, the planning processes, instruction and student engagement, and program evaluation procedures. The analysis section then presents findings related to the collaborative process and resulting instruction. Following the narratives and analysis, a theoretical model of collaborative partnership is presented that draws together the themes and provides policy recommendations for future arts partnerships.

Introduction to the Cases

Program One was a collaboration between a theater company and an urban neighborhood elementary school involving artist-teachers and the teachers who worked with third-grade students. These students were clearly varied in terms of motivation, maturity, and achievement. A handful of fourth-grade students were placed in one classroom for the year. Program Two was a collaboration between pairs of arts and humanities teachers within an intensive residential summer enrichment program for a statewide selection of gifted and talented high school students in the performing and visual arts and humanities. The curriculum for Program One encompassed the school year and had to take into account state standards, grades, and yearly testing requirements. Program Two, as an enrichment program, was not bound by the need to test or deliver grades and was expected not only to meet state standards, but to surpass them.

Both sets of courses were team-taught by arts and nonarts teachers. The arts integrated curricula for both programs treated the arts as "co-equal," as Bresler described, where the arts were "an equal partner, integrating the general curriculum with arts-specific contents, skills, expressions, and modes of thinking, and [the curriculum] addressed large principals and issues." As discussed by Jacobs, both cases drew teachers and students into holistic learning experiences addressing cognitive, physical, moral, affective, and spiritual dimensions of their lives. In both cases, creative and analytical thinking skills were taught in addition to concept and skill-acquisition content for learning in the arts and in other disciplines. In both cases the teachers used direct instruction and guided discovery instructional strategies. Further, in both cases, instructional content was fluid and could be considered beyond the sophistication or capabilities of their student populations. Both programs paired arts and other subjects through cognitive processes, as described by Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss: "attentive observation, identification of meaningful detail, selection of appropriate representational strategies, student reflection and self-critique." With such similarities in the type of instruction, a theory that encompassed the process of collaboration in dissimilar contexts was thought to be more powerful. It was hoped that a comparison between the two programs would serve to ground theoretical statements about the nature of collaborative curriculum development for successful arts integration.

Program One: A Theater Company and the Elementary School

From researcher field notes:

The third grade students sit in a circle in the front of the class with the artist-teacher. The classroom teaches sits behind the students in a chair, occasionally shushing a student and joining in the discussion. The artist-teacher has just come in for the day, and they have all just read the segment of Gilgamesh where the heroes battle Huwawa, the guardian of the cedar forest. The artist-teacher begins with questions, leading the student to discover that Huwawa could represent "things we are afraid of." Students each create their own representation of Huwawa's face on Popsicle sticks and place them in slots to create a Huwawa statue (in the story, Huwawa has many faces). The teachers provide a long red cloth tongue to put in the multi-faced display, on which the students take turns writing their personal fears. The collaboratively built Huwawa statue leads to a student-generated impromptu discussion of "things that scare us," of friendship and facing challenges together like Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

The theater company is relatively young and growing in popularity. Their self-stated mission, articulated by the artistic director, is to "activate citizenry"—to use well-crafted art to encourage people to playfully attend to and participate in their communities. This philosophy saturates all aspects of the company's life, from the process used to develop productions to the content and props in the performances and in the unique turns of phrase used by the staff. Each person involved with the company, from the director to the cast members to the shop interns, can articulate the company's particular philosophy.

The company is known for "spectacle theater," which is improvisatory and often performed in public spaces. They incorporate puppetry (of all sizes and shapes) and "automata" (mechanical props) made from recycled materials. The props are functional, beautiful, creative, and fun (audiences are regularly invited backstage to play with them). Types of performances include productions written and performed in collaboration with community organizations, parades, commissions in city parks or other venues, and a yearly main stage production.

The company uses a unique process for creating productions by taking ideas from print, film, theater, or the environment and developing these ideas into new works of art. The process begins with the section of an idea rich in imaginative possibilities. Once chosen, the director and company members work through the idea for plot points, themes, automata ideas and characters; these are explored through improvisation, writing, and discussion. The idea is distilled into plot "beats," and themes, characters, and automata are created to fit the technology of the idea's time period. Finally, a story is created by the actors and director through imaginative play with beats, themes, characters, puppets, and props. Final products regularly garner acclaim by critics and public alike.

It was both the mission and the creative process that induced the company to create a curricular partnership with a local school. According to the artistic director, project coordinator, and the artist-teachers, the program goals were to enhance community involvement with the theater, bring the company's mission and creative process to a public school and help teachers and students develop.
new perspectives of self and community. Goals for student learning included training in the theater company’s creative process, enhancing kinesthetic learning skills through exploration and reflection, and for students to expand their perspectives by developing artistic skills in visual art, theater, and music. In return for the theater company’s work in the schools, the school community would participate in and provide creative input for the theater’s productions to form a symbiotic relationship.

The coordinator hired to spearhead the program was versed in arts integration, theater, and the educational programs across the city, and had a strong personal commitment to the mission of the company. We secured funding through city grants to provide money for the artist-teachers and to pay for planning time before and during the school year. The company hired two artist-teachers to plan the curriculum and work in the school one day a week. Each teacher had ongoing relationships with the company and experience teaching children. The artist-teachers’ student learning goals reflected the mission of the theater company; both stated that they hoped to put their beliefs about the importance of kinesthetic learning and playfulness to the test and each wanted to experiment with new ways to help children learn in and through the arts.

The company solicited applicants and interviewed several schools to find one that best fit their criteria for prior experience with arts-integration, teacher-led initiatives, and a diverse student population. The partner school was a math and science magnet elementary school with a written commitment to diversity and a demonstrated commitment to arts-integrated curriculum. They could only afford one arts teacher, and so they had a full-time music teacher on staff. The school has a long history of arts integration in visual arts and drama, supported and sustained largely by teacher efforts. The teachers themselves wrote grants to bring artist programs from various arts organizations. The principal supported the teachers’ efforts with what one teacher called “intelligent support” by encouraging arts integration, allowing the teachers to develop their curricula as they saw fit and consistently calling for the use of teaching strategies to promote student success. The teachers and principal chose to apply for the collaboration in the hope of developing a curriculum that would stretch the teachers beyond their current arts-integration practices, unify the grade-level curriculum, and involve the community in and surrounding the school in artistic projects. The teachers stated that they wanted to give their stu-

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dents new perspectives on life and show them new ways to think about themselves. The principal hoped, additionally, that the program might boost attendance rates (already above 95 percent).

The Planning Process

The program began with collaborative planning between the theater company participants and the teachers who interacted with the two third-grade classes (the two classroom teachers, the science specialist, a computer specialist, reading specialist, the music teacher, and the principal). The planning team met twice in the late spring in the school and held a week-long planning session in August, held in the theater’s home, to prepare for the upcoming pilot year.

The theater company chose the story of Gilgamesh to serve as the basis for the year-long curriculum. At first the teachers expressed surprise at the choice of text, alarmed by the provocative and mature thematic content, but as the program coordinator led them to extract themes, the teachers soon began to relate the text to their existing curriculum. By the end of the first planning session the team developed a plan to introduce the story as an archeological exploration, a journey to examine both the story and the “story of the story” by comparing Sumerian culture with current cultural practices. The story would be presented in segments: each new segment would be “discovered” as an archeological find on a stone tablet and would serve as the basis for a unit of instruction. The students would examine cities, leadership, fears, friendship, gods, mortality, and journeys.

The curriculum was designed as stu-

dent inquiry. Introductions to a story segment would spark students to generate questions that would be answered through investigations in all disciplines. The central question for the year was “How do we look at the past?” Additional questions included: “How do we gain access to the past? How does our perspective change what we see?” One artist-teacher expressed interest in creating a “spontaneous curriculum” in which the children would think that everything that happened in the classroom was unplanned, even though teachers would direct the activities and the content.

In addition to planning the curriculum, the coordinator scheduled a series of observations and theater experiences, effectively immersing the team in the theater company’s process. They visited two on-site locations where spectacles were in preparation and operation, as well as collaboratively built Gilgamesh-inspired automata for each of the two classrooms.

Instruction

Two hours of instructional time were given each week to the two artist-teachers. Each teacher took each class for an
hour and classroom teachers remained in the classroom with the artist-teachers. Arts instruction included content learning in visual and the performing arts. In visual art, the students were taught to analyze ancient artworks to identify their formal, expressive, and cultural properties, respond to art from another culture, produce appropriate symbols to develop metaphor imagery, apply elements of shape, line, color, and space in their designs, and explore in automata, drawings, paintings, clay, mixed media, and "found" media. In theater and dance, students were taught to create dramatic representations of stories, analyze characters, settings and plot lines, relate works of theater to their personal lives, evaluate their own and peer's performances, improvise movement for character and plot development, explore vocal possibilities, develop visual environments for performances, and depict characters and events through movement. In music, the students were taught to sing in the head voice, explore vocal timbres and placement, listen and analyze music for melodic and rhythmic features, compare music from another culture to our culture, write lyrics to a known tune, add rhythmic ostinatos to songs, and explore movement appropriate to the expressive characteristics of musical selections.

The teaching team planned instruction with seamless transitions between disciplines. When students learned about money as part of a math lesson, they discovered that Sumerian culture used a barter system. With the artist-teachers the next day, they created Sumerian cultural trinkets and artifacts to trade in a classroom-reproduced Mesopotamian marketplace. When students learned "compare and contrast" in language arts, they compared the characters of the gods and humans and then imagined characteristics of invented "gods" to develop masks for new characters. The teachers acted like the connections were unexpected, commenting to each other in front of the students about how "amazing" it was to have such luck. For the students, the dove-tailings appeared magical. They responded eagerly any time they had the chance to tell the teachers that they had learned something about a new topic in another lesson.

The process of instruction and learning followed the creative process used by the theater company. Teachers guided the students in groups to brainstorm on topics and make personal connections, and then to imagine new possibilities. Then, the students would take their imaginings into the art form and receive training in the art form. In one example, taken from field notes, an artist-teacher leads students from their reading assignment into a visual art project.

The teacher began with a review by asking the students to do a "quick write" on what they remembered about the gods they've learned of in the story. The students wrote for a few minutes and then shared their thoughts while the teacher collected ideas on paper. After only a moment, she commented that the students were making "such amazing compare and contrast statements!" and the students excitedly told her that they had learned to compare and contrast only the day before! She asked the students if the gods' power is like human strength, questioning them to discover that the story presented any non-human force as a god character. She asked the students to imagine other possible "god" characters in a second quick write, and giving suggestions like the "god of sneezes." The students shared their ideas and when one student complained that his idea had been "taken" the teacher responded "Art isn't copying, it is always sharing." The students next chose one "god" character each to create visually, and the teacher introduced a mask-making project. She explained that students would experiment with movement inside the masks once they have created their mask, to "find out how you act differently with these masks on." The student wrote for a third time, now to brainstorm character descriptions for their "god," and then drew a face on their papers, visually heightening one or two facial features to show the character's personality traits as described. The teacher then gave a short lecture/demonstration on ways to create masks with old cardboard, glue, tape, staples and paint, and how to make three-dimensional facial features with layered, ripped, curled or rolled cardboard. The students sketched their character onto the mask form and began the work of layering while the teacher mentored individuals. The rest of the class was spent adding layers and paint (with teacher reminders that colors and style should match character choices).

Planning and instruction intertwined throughout the year. The four teachers held weekly planning and reflection meetings, and the coordinator traveled to the school on a regular basis to ask if the artist-teachers had any needs or concerns. Artist-teacher presence in the schools also allowed for additional collaborations with the science specialist, the computer specialist, and the reading specialist. The collaborations with other specialists took place after the first marking period. As one specialist explained, "reality set in" in the fall and they had to get their programs in order before they could implement collaborative ideas.

The music teacher was the only one who did not participate in the integrative efforts. No one on the planning or administrative teams attempted to inform her of the team's plans, nor did she attempt to learn how to integrate music with the ongoing curriculum. The other teachers felt that she must be overwhelmed with her own program and did not have time to develop new instruction. One of the artist-teachers filled the void left with no music integration by bringing in pictures of a broken lyre from an archeological dig. The students examined artwork on pottery to deduce that it must be a musical instrument and reconstructed a lyre from pieces that she brought in. They then listened to recorded examples of Mesopotamian lyre and vocal music, improvised with vocal style, and translated a poetic Sumerian text to write lyrics for a learned melody from the recording.

For the end-of-year celebration, a classroom teacher expressed a desire to have the students perform a summative public spectacle for the community. The artist-teachers agreed to produce the piece, but expressed frustration over the drain on instructional time and the shift of focus from creative thinking and developing artistry to rote rehearsals and training in performance skills. The coordinator took note and suggested that they eliminate or substantially alter the summative performance to more appropriately reflect the artist-teachers' student learning goals in a final reflective planning session.
**Student Engagement**

Student behavior throughout the year often appeared a little chaotic, indicative of a high level of emotional engagement. They were vocal and energetic while discussing topics and gossiped and traded stories while working on projects. The principal and teachers commented on the unexpected sophistication of student discussions, as when one class began a spontaneous discussion on immortality. Teachers often had to work to gain their attention when it was time to move on. The students viewed the year as an "uncharted journey," similar to the one taken by *Gilgamesh*. They appeared not to know that they did not direct the curriculum; as one student described: "I love this year because the teachers don't know what we will do next!" They regularly expressed excitement when showing visitors their work and inquiry questions, and frustration over skills they had not yet developed or ideas that did not work. Students were able to discuss the curricular structure and the value of their experience, as exemplified in these reflective thoughts:

[The teachers] thought it [the year] would be challenging. At first we wouldn’t know what to do and we don’t know the whole story. So, we need to ask, and be curious.

We could learn about *Gilgamesh* when we became teachers we could teach our kids, because they will think it is fun.

(In the following interview transcript, I am K.)

**Child 1:** That's not like school.

**K:** But are you learning anything?

**Child 1:** Oh, yeah, we’re learning a LOT (every child agrees and speaks or nods).

**Child 2:** We’re learning about Gods and Goddesses, about prewriting, fast writing. You have to keep writing even if you write "I don’t know what to write. I don’t know what to write" you have to keep going until it is time to stop.

**Child 3:** We’re learning about the 13 winds.

**K:** I saw the sticks in your rooms, why did you create those?

**Child 3:** When things blow, it makes it prettier, and helps us see.

**Child 1:** We’re learning how to work with shapes, how to make new shapes with what you have.

Students kept written reflections and personal interpretations of story segments, readings, and various artifacts in field notebooks throughout the year. Inquiry posters for each new part of the story with questions that the students generated about the plot, characters, context, and time period, were kept on the walls. Art projects and student writings were hung on walls and a bulletin board outside the classrooms was designated as the "*Gilgamesh*" board with pictures of students engaged in *Gilgamesh*-work and student writing samples were displayed. Visitors were treated to child-led tours and shown field journals, arts projects, and inquiry posters.

The artist-teachers informally evaluated products of the student work.

**Program Evaluation**

The planning team held a final meeting to reflect on the projects and process and made decisions how to improve the program for the following year. The program's pilot year was determined to be a success by all participants with plans to tweak the collaboration in future years. Informal program assessments were based on observed student engagement and learning, teacher anecdotes and evidence of student inquiries, student attendance, and charted documentation of classroom activities that followed or surpassed individual items in the state standards. A classroom teacher created and maintained a Reggio-Emilia bulletin board to document student engagement and classroom learning throughout the school year. End of year assessments included evaluations of the school, the documentations, and informal teacher anecdotes. The principal commented that a significant marker of success was that the *Gilgamesh* project garnered the attention of teachers in other grade levels, who expressed more interest in arts integration themselves.

An external assessment was conducted midway through the year by a group of city-hired school evaluators who toured the school and spent approximately three minutes in each classroom. An evaluator expressed concern over the value of the integrated curriculum. This reviewer had asked a child what he was doing while he built a clay trinket for trade in the marketplace and was displeased by the child's response that he was "making a bead" with no explanation about why. The principal expressed some concern over the student's response and prompted the teachers to focus on developing student reflective skills.

**Program Two: Summer Enrichment for Gifted and Talented Students**

From researcher field notes:

In a large classroom with long tables, high school students sit in a variety of postures at long tables. Two teachers stand in the front of the class to make announcements and then move to the back while a group of students present a staged reading of "Words, Words, Words" from the David Ives' play *All in the Timing*. At the finish, one teacher leads a class discussion while the other walks around the classroom.

**Teacher:** All right, so, first of all, I think the actors deserve a hand. (All clap, laugh.) So let me start with the actors, or with the characters the actors were trying to play. What, from the text, did you feel the playwright wanted to share?

**Student:** Sometimes he was pessimistic, almost, almost Marxist, at least in the character that I played. Repressing people, just because we're workers doesn't mean the "man" can't get them down. And, it seemed like a kind of testament or statement against behaving like sheep, behaving like monkeys, you know . . . it's like their thing. It's like, inevitability or something.

**Teacher:** All right. And you?

**Student actor 1:** The character I played, um, he was just, he was somewhat, he gave in to the, he gave in to him basically, he just wanted to, basically, he thought that maybe they would be free. Basically, just stand up for yourself and don't really give in.

**Student actor 2:** I feel like each character represented, or brought, a different thing to the table when they were trying to approach the problem. Because, it was about honor, a push for power, and then my character was kind of like "I'm just going to sit and wait this out for a while."

And then he wanted to cooperate to see if
they could get it done. So it was kind of like three different ways to approach something to get it done. The problem, ironically, was that it was about creating a piece of artwork. Writing this thing that had already been done. It had already been finished, and it's just replicating the society before in a simple way. And if you put three humans together and said “there put the right shapes there” it wouldn't seem so awkward, it wouldn't seem like such an insurmountable task as it is with three moneys, something sub-humans, that it was something they cannot do.

The summer enrichment program for gifted and talented high school students in the humanities and the visual and performing arts is held for one summer month each year. The primary educational goal and mantra of the program is “process over product.” Teachers are encouraged to design courses that focus on exploration, critical and creative thinking skills, artistic skill development, and new perspectives. Common student comments in evaluations refer to the experience as “life changing” and “the only real school I have attended.”

A second and equally important goal is for all of the staff and teachers to become a “community of learners.” This goal is accomplished by programming classes and activities for most of the day and evening, limiting contact with anyone not in the program, encouragement by administration to challenge the students intellectually and socially, and programs to allow classes to share their learning experiences with other classes. All members of the community are on a first-name basis and all classes are team-taught by pairs of teachers. Mornings are spent in major disciplines; visual art, performing arts, or humanities courses. Afternoon classes are integrated arts courses team-taught by humanities and arts teachers. Some thirteen different courses are offered each summer. Students are scheduled so they work with different teachers in the mornings and afternoons so, for example, no visual art teacher will teach visual art students in their arts integrated course. Historically, the arts integrated course originated as administrations sought to unite the arts and humanities programs. Over the past several years the integrated arts courses have become a central and unique feature of this program.

Teachers, staff and students are chosen by program directors on a yearly basis. Many faculty members and staff return to the program for several years. In any given year, approximately 10 percent of the teaching slots are filled with new faculty, and are selected from a pool of applicants solicited through national searches. Interviewees are asked to articulate their teaching style and philosophy for a match with the program. Students are solicited through the public schools around the state and chosen by audition, interview, grades, and teacher/school recommendations. Students can only attend the program one summer, and the student’s public school pays the tuition so students bear no financial responsibility.

The Planning Process

A program theme is chosen by faculty and staff each year, around which all courses are designed. For the year of the study the theme was “Journey Beyond.” A planning weekend is held three months before the start of the program. Here, the administration and faculty become acquainted and teaching pairs self-select through what the administration calls a “dating process.” Some pairs collaborate for several summers in a row, but the administration always encourages senior faculty to partner with new faculty. Pairings begin when faculty are asked to share interests around a table during the first afternoon. Throughout the day teachers seek partners and these are announced the following morning. The second planning day is given over to team-planning course titles, goals, and descriptions (citing state standards of excellence) and course content. Course topics are intentionally open-ended and often specifically geared toward student inquiry. Examples of past classes include “Post-Humanism,” “Portology” (the study of doors), “Blue,” “Tribes in the Mist,” “Modern Muckraking,” and “Folk Art.”

Pairs of teachers described the planning process as the result of “synergy” and “coincidence.” They explained that in the process of planning, they each came up with many ideas and felt strongly about some but then had to “let go” of some ideas to allow the course to take shape. The director encourages teaching pairs to solicit ideas from the rest of the faculty, and comments on course descriptions and adds brainstorming ideas to ensure that that each course is unique. It is this aspect of the learning community, the availability and willingness of fellow teachers to lend ideas and expertise that many faculty report as the primary reason for their devotion to the program, and the reason they return year after year.

The Instruction

The teachers for the two classes expressed course goals that involved the development of critical and creative thinking, kinesthetic experience, and engagement with a variety of art forms and humanities topics. Arts instruction included visual and performance art media. Arts instruction included content learning in visual and the performing arts. In visual art, the students were taught to identify formal, expressive and cultural properties of artworks, to interpret artists’ intentions, to produce appropriate symbols to develop metaphoric imagery, apply elements of shape, line, color and space in their designs, and exploration in drawing, painting, book binding, mixed media and “found” media. In theater and dance, students were taught to analyze and interpret the artistic intentions of theater works, to analyze theater for plot, character, setting, and themes to examine the ways that works of art represent or respond to human conditions and cultures, create dramatic representations of self-authored stories, analyze characters, settings and plot lines, relate works of theater to their personal lives, evaluate their own and peer’s performances, develop visual environments for performances, and analyze scripts to develop characters.

In music, the students explored singing, inventing songs to develop personal expression, listen and analyze music for formal and expressive features and compare these features to the thematic content in the lyrics.
All student work was voluntary and no grades were assigned. Teacher, peer, and self-evaluations were given verbally or in written comments as informal assessments. The first course was an analytical and kinesthetic approach to examine how artists and writers portray themselves and their beliefs through their art. The goals for this class, in the teachers' words, were:

The idea is that they first realize that there are trappings that people put up, boundaries and trappings in their artwork, and instead of revealing themselves they hide themselves. The goal is to strip those and look below the surface, then create some of the trappings themselves, that is, publicly invent themselves . . . no art is accidental, and to look at art critically you have to evaluate the context in which it was created.

Project work included reading and analyzing literature and drama, music and visual art, and discussions about the artists' intentions versus "what was really said." After examining examples in each genre, students created art and literature. Activities included examining Diego Rivera murals and creating murals, writing poems and short stories, examining music selections to explore their cultural contexts and expressive features, writing songs, making self-portraits and designing a gallery, examining documentaries, and staged readings. All activities were followed by reflective discussions. The class motto, announced daily by the teachers and taken as a mantra by the students was "There is no wrong." In creative work, the teachers actively refrained from giving students the "answers." Instead, they let the students ask other students for new perspectives and opinions.

The second course was about paper. Teachers for this course described the course goals:

Basically, to learn through play. Our concern is to make sure they have fun while learning new skills and thinking outside of the box. Stop thinking so concretely. Realize that there's more than one solution to a problem, instead of standardized answers, idiosyncratic answers and thinking. People learn more effectively through play than any other way, experiencing rather than just reading. Instead of secondary, it is primary information, its building. Because it's unconscious. I like to process at the end of a unit and let the kids verbalize what they've come across and what they've learned. They tell us instead of our telling them.

This course began with brainstorming about the uses of paper (utilitarian and artistic) and the teachers had the students create sculptures with wet paper towels, to make them "take something conventional and make it unconventional." Project work included students learning to make a paper press by being given materials and ideas (but no specific directions), designing and building the press from scratch. They found raw materials for making paper (dryer lint, bark, bits of flowers and leaves, and recycled paper) made their own paper, designed and bound books, and made body casts out of papier-mâché. The teachers practiced what they called "tennis" with the students; if students wanted help or teacher-opinions one of the teachers would bounce them back by asking for their opinions. The teachers only gave suggestions to students who were "desperate" for ideas, otherwise stating "We're just giving one perspective; you're the artist.

Student Engagement

Student behaviors were similar to those in the elementary program. Students actively wrote about and discussed issues, worked on projects, and reflected on both their thinking processes and products. They gossiped and shared personal stories as they worked, laughing and playing together. They exhibited emotional engagement by working on projects throughout class periods and often beyond, returning to the classroom after class to complete work.

Most of the students both understood and appreciated the focus on thinking skills and the respect given to their interests and ideas (some expressed frustration over the amount of reflection, stating that they preferred grades to informal and peer assessments):

I like how the class allows us all to try and express ourselves through different mediums. The variety of projects makes it exciting; I have an opportunity to use and discuss various mediums.

These assignments are very creatively focused and give me an opportunity to express myself.

The projects were tactile—little kid stuff with meaning. I enjoy working with my hands a lot.

The class is a lot less structured than high school classes and the students are able to contribute more.

It is more student-oriented rather than teacher-oriented. The teachers lead us, but we learn only as much as we want to and sometimes want to learn more than the teachers plan for—it is based on what we want to know rather than what the teachers want to teach.

Program Evaluation

Program administrators informally assessed class success by examining student participation, the amount of work the students were willing to do, and the community built within each course. Students provide written evaluations, and the administration reviews these along with the final course syllabi. Faculty members have individual conversations with administration to evaluate their courses and their experiences. After a final review by administration, summative evaluations are part of the decision to retain or let go of faculty before the next program year. There is no evaluation based on meeting the state standards cited in the course syllabi.

These two courses were generally viewed as successful in the eyes of the students and staff. The staff acknowledged that sometimes students expressed frustration over time missed in their discipline-based courses for work on afternoon class projects. Some students expressed that they thought the kinesthetic nature of the classes, and the lack of grades, made them "less academic." Teachers sometimes expressed frustration over collaborations and administrators acknowledged that there were understandable difficulties whenever strong teachers collaborate.

An external review was conducted by a panel of state-hired evaluators, who spent approximately an hour with several classes and wrote "recommendations and recommendations." The evaluators commended the program for the selection of content materials "that are truly challeng-
ing to gifted students both in the visual and performing arts and the humanities” and “for the course design which offers teachers and students an opportunity to listen and value one another’s opinions and suggestions.” Recommendations included calling for more integration of arts into the humanities students’ experiences to “maximize the opportunities for the Humanities students with stronger visual and performing arts interests to explore more of those interests, just as the visual and performing arts students have an opportunity to explore their humanities interests through the [arts integration] courses.”

Findings

The goal of the analysis was to move beyond descriptive narrative into the realm of analytical generalization: to develop an explanatory theory for the success of the programs, which would be parsimonious and yet honor the complex nature of the collaborations. The initial guiding questions allowed me to look for information about the motives, characteristics, beliefs about learning, and interest in the collaborations, and to develop new questions as my understanding deepened. I gathered a variety of perspectives to triangulate the ideas in my emergent analysis to develop a conceptual perspective on the data.

The data analysis progressed through a series of steps, moving from open coding to collect all of the emergent topics, then organizing the codes into categories, to finding connections from the categories to develop themes. While category coding allowed me to articulate what could impact the curriculum, relationship-seeking analysis allowed me to generate a model for how everything interacted and impacted the process of curriculum development and the final curricular products. Throughout the process I made constant comparisons of analyzed data with raw and incoming data, looked for negative cases of data to change my analysis, and checked with both participants and an independent coder to support or refute my categories and analyses. The analytical steps were recursive as data collection continued and the categories were reorganized and even open-coding terms changed as a result of newly gathered information.

The questions “What is the process of collaboration between the arts-teachers and the nonarts teachers?” and “What is the nature of the curricula that develops through the partnerships?” focused on potentially causal connections between the teachers’ and administrators’ actions, the instructional content, and student engagement. I found, however, that one-way causal connections were not truly the appropriate connections to make between the actors and the curricula. Teacher interactions, content, in-class experiences, and student reflections all impacted each other. In fact, part of the powerful nature of the curricula was this constant state of flux in which all participants “wrote the script” as the journey took place. From the interrelated themes I began to work toward a model of successful collaboration for arts integrated curricula, along with related policy statements.

Four themes emerged as irreducible and consequential to the process of the collaborations. First, the most important force behind both programs, the “heart” of each curriculum, was the philosophical mission of each organization. Second, the personal characteristics and student learning goals of the teachers determined the level of collaborative success. Third, administrations’ relationships with the teachers supported the partnerships and protected the curricula. Fourth, the content and approach to instruction focused on process over product, stressing higher order thinking skills, including improvisation and reflection. This focus, in turn, affected both the nature of arts integration and challenged the students to move beyond their comfort zones.

Organization Philosophy and Goals

The primary forces behind the collaborations were the goals and the philosophies of each organization. The goals were similar: develop a learning community, use improvisation, play, reflection to enlarge student perspectives, and teaching a creative process focused on student inquiry. Each organization clearly articulated specific goals related to teaching strategies, collaborative strategies, and content. The goals were part of the larger mission for each organization (not just the collaboration) and formed the “heart” of the planning process and curriculum content.

This heart of the curriculum impacted the collaborative process and curriculum in two ways. First, the organizations carefully selected participants whose philosophies mirrored the organizations. These teachers firmly believed in the value of teaching critical and creative thinking and used improvisation and play as tools of creative learning. Second, the heart of these curricula suffused every aspect of the collaboration. Each organizations' carefully crafted philosophies were stated and reinforced throughout the collaboration by knowledgeable administrators, affecting the collaborative process, the choice of content, instructional strategies, and classroom materials.

Teacher Characteristics

Specific teacher characteristics were the second major force affecting the collaborations, similar to findings in earlier other studies of positive teacher traits. Four personal teacher characteristics—strong convictions, tenacity, flexibility, and trust—had to be balanced for the collaboration to be successful. Teacher characteristics were held in balance during the programs by teachers' beliefs in the value of the curricula for student learning and/or personal gain from the collaboration, and by administrator mediation efforts. Characteristics became unbalanced as a result of perceptions of seniority or expertise and issues with class space and instructional time.

The teachers expressed and demonstrated strong convictions about teaching and student learning goals, and the goals (as described earlier) mirrored the organizations’ goals. One veteran teacher explained, “I used to teach preschool, and I never saw a reason to change when I began to work with older students, and now research has supported my beliefs.” The teachers enjoyed challenging their students with higher level work and thinking than they felt was commonly taught. A sec-
ond personality trait was tenacity. Collaborations were most successful when each teacher held firmly to their beliefs and were persistent about teaching to their student learning goals, even when the goals conflicted with their partner teachers’ visions. Their tenacity kept a variety of perspectives in the planning process and brought depth to the classroom experiences. The inevitable conflicts that arose during planning sessions led them to invent creative ways to follow through with their beliefs.

The third characteristic that the teachers shared was flexibility. This manifested itself in teacher efforts to “try on” partners’ areas of expertise and to become students while their partner led instruction. Teachers sometimes worked alongside students in activities led by their partners and practiced their partner’s craft in the classroom or during planning. The teachers also demonstrated a willingness to become “experts” in new areas as they perceived a need or when their partners needed assistance. Mutual flexibility and developing new areas of expertise allowed the teachers to banter together in front of the students, and this in turn led to student excitement, as when students expressed delight in “being let into” the ongoing experiences.

The fourth teacher characteristic was trust, which manifested itself in the teachers’ beliefs in the value of the program and partnership, in their belief in their teaching partners’ and partner organizations’ expertise, and the belief that the partnership could solve any problems in the long term that emerged in the short term. The teachers expressed belief that the collaborative curriculum benefited the students and, more important, felt that they were gaining new perspectives and new ways to teach through the partnership.

Collaborative efforts were less successful when one or more of the characteristics was absent. When beliefs and tenacity were not held in balance with flexibility and trust, the resulting collaboration was also unbalanced. Results in these cases were teacher frustrations and a tendency for one teacher’s vision to be more prominent. For example, an administrator spoke of problems with frustration (and poor instruction) when one teacher-partner lacked tenacity or when one teacher lacked the flexibility to allow their partner teacher to take charge of the class. In situations where one partner “abandoned” in planning or instructional time out of a desire to avoid conflict, deference to another teachers’ experience or expertise, or personal shyness, or when a teacher “took over,” the overall curriculum was evaluated less positively by students and teachers alike. Less successful collaborative efforts almost invariably led to less successful curriculum and student engagement.

Relationships

The ways that relationships between teachers were developed and protected were important factors in collaborative successes. In both programs, administrators encouraged and provided opportunities for teachers to engage in constant planning and reflecting sessions. The administration took an active role in the relationships through mentoring and facilitating, and also through troubleshooting to protect the partnership from external influences.

Administrators took active roles in facilitating and mediating the relationships between partner teachers. Extensive planning sessions with guided activities gave the partners organized time to become familiar with each others’ work, and administrators offered services as facilitator and supporter for their teacher’s efforts. One administrator for the enrichment program spoke of a “quiet” policy to send seasoned experienced teachers who would offer a compassionate ear and guidance to less experienced partners experiencing collaborative problems. Similarly (but more overtly), the program coordinator for the theater company appeared often in the school, attended reflective sessions, and constantly asked the artist-teachers how they felt about the partnership and instruction. This coordinator intervened during planning meetings to reinforce the organization and artist-teacher goals. When an administrator did not take an active role in encouraging collaboration and interaction, as with the music teacher in the elementary program, the collaboration broke down and integration suffered as a result.

The administrators in each of the three organizations expressed that they believed their role was to “take the heat so the teachers can do their work.” One administrator explained that this sometimes meant fending off external reviewers, while at other times it meant providing the materials and time needed for the curriculum to happen. In both programs, administrators saw their role as protector to the teachers’ freedom, to allow them to work out the organizations’ and their own curricular goals.

Focus on Process

The arts instruction in both programs was oriented toward teaching a creative process and developing skills, rather than simply on imparting artistic skills and concepts. The products and performances in classes were largely intended for in-house experience rather than public ceremony. Without a drive to public performance, the students’ creative and analytical processes dominated instructional time and teachers’ attention. Students were encouraged to reflect on each experience to learn from their engagement with the materials, learning to “put on their artist hats” and see themselves as artists by learning artistic skills without public judgment.

This is not to say that performance was absent from the curricula. Students performed for one another and performances were considered a part of classroom learning, which then allowed for informal teacher feedback as well as self and peer evaluations. Students also offered impromptu performances to visitors and the school communities. However, the artist-teachers resisted using arts instruction to develop a “performance summary” of learning in other disciplines, as is sometimes the case when arts teachers are required to develop the final performance for an arts integrated curriculum. These arts teachers believed that the level of success in connecting critical and creative thinking skills across the curriculum diminished when summative perfor-
perations were required, as the instructional focus had to suddenly shift from teaching creative process to preparing students to stand, sit and speak on cue, memorize text, and behave appropriately for visitors. In the elementary school, when a summative performance was requested (the result of a classroom teacher’s vision overriding the judgments of partner teachers) the time spent in rote training and rehearsal was frustrating to the artist-teachers, who felt the experience diminished the value of the learning that took place throughout the year.

There were challenges to the “process” approach in both programs; the elementary teachers wanted a final performance spectacle, the elementary music teacher did not participate in arts integration because she had to prepare for a public performance, and some high school humanities faculty described the arts integration classes as “humanities lite” or “arts and crafts” time. The tendency to refer to the arts as “nonintellectual” learning was not absent from the collaboration; it was held in check, however, by the constant attention of the administrators and participating artist-teachers. This last finding was consistent with many models of curriculum integration that often ignore or misrepresent the artistic process and therefore miss the fundamental nature of creative and critical thinking and expression that connects the arts, sciences, and humanities.17

Attention to process in instruction was echoed by nonarts teachers as well, as one of the high school partners commented, “It really doesn’t matter what we teach. It is the manner, not the matter.” Attention to the thinking skills used in the arts was accomplished largely through constant verbalization, writing, and reflective sessions in the classrooms about the process of making and accomplishing artistic decisions. The discussions themselves were often emotionally and philosophically challenging to the students. Elementary students explained that they had to be “adults” when they worked with the artist-teachers and were constantly prompted by all of the partner teachers not to play mindlessly with materials or in discussions. Some high school students were frustrated with a project requiring new modes of expression and the amount of talking in class, and felt frustrated that they received no summative grades. For some of these older students, who had already defined themselves as “nonartistic,” these challenges were considerable. The high school program teachers remarked that they had to constantly provide positive feedback and refrain from giving answers and opinions to help these students break from their need to evaluate their work prematurely.

**Toward a Model of Collaborative Arts Integration Curriculum Development**

The collaborative process and instructional outcomes of both programs supported the findings of other studies that have investigated the value of arts integration in schools for student learning and engagement18 but go on to show how the interrelationships between themes support the dynamic nature of curriculum development and implementation. While the organization’s philosophy and goals did not change, but rather formed the heart of the curricular development process and instructional content, the teacher characteristics, relationships, and instructional content were each affected by each other. The curriculum changed with dynamic shifts in any of the other categories, the balance of teacher characteristics were affected by both relationships and the instructional content, and student engagement with the instruction could alter the teacher characteristics and the relationships (see figure 1).

**Implications**

These findings from this study may be useful to organizations who hope to develop arts integration partnerships that connect learning in the arts and in other disciplines in meaningful and
powerful ways. There are several implications for arts organizations and schools where partnerships between arts and nonarts teachers are sought.

First, arts organizations and schools that wish to develop partnerships must think deeply about their mission as it relates to developing community through arts integration and about their beliefs related to learning in the arts, and select artist-teachers who share the same missions. The strongest bonds between artist-teachers and the arts organization may be formed when there is a strong commitment throughout the organization. This bond is important for the artist-teachers, who often are in situations where they have less influence (or power) as visitors to classrooms, or because nonarts teachers may not understand the process of critical and creative thinking in the arts. A well-articulated philosophy that addresses the goals of learning in the arts is important to a partnership for the development of meaningful curriculum to engage students in larger ethical questions, intellectual, affective, and kinesthetic learning, and to promote thinking skills in the arts. The learning goals of the organization and artist-teachers must be reinforced throughout the process through participant selection and the organization of curriculum planning. Second, administrators must be able to support and defend the arts integration programs from external evaluators who may make judgments after short engagements with participants and instruction. Simple “snapshots” of process-related curriculum can miss important aspects of student learning, particularly when external reviewers may focus on behaviors rather than thinking skills or emotional engagement.

Third, administrative support is needed to mediate the relationships between collaborating teachers. There are inevitable conflicts that arise because of different philosophies and goals, differing levels of experience, and ownership questions over learning spaces and student time. Administrators need to be aware of potential problems and step in to help keep teacher characteristics in balance when partners plan and reflect on their instruction.

Fourth, training in creative and critical thinking in the arts and the kinesthetic learning that takes place in arts instruction should be valued and evaluated, as are the products of student work. Attention to the critical and creative strategies used by artists in the creation, analysis, and evaluation of art can help student make connections with critical and creative thinking in other disciplines to make learning more meaningful across the curriculum. Toward this end, partners must come to agreement that the arts are not to be treated as “projects” that demonstrate learning in other disciplines, but rather that arts are another way to learn. Without this level of engagement in the arts, training can easily become “arts and crafts” and arts integration may lessen the effectiveness of student learning in the art rather than expand on it.

The value of arts integration lies in its great potential to help learners experience learning as a holistic endeavor that connects their personal feelings with intellectual and physical skill development and helps them anticipate learning challenges with joy. Examples of programs that accomplish these goals should be constantly sought to learn more about how more students can be given the same opportunities. Continued examination of the process of curriculum development may deepen our understanding of learning in the arts, as well as deepening our understanding of the possibilities and challenges to collaborative teaching. Case studies on successful (and unsuccessful) arts integration programs are needed to broaden our knowledge base. Case studies of artist-teachers’ experiences in the schools can inform organizations about the issues related to relationships between teachers. Finally, studies that examine policy related to arts integration in schools, and how policy has changed over time, are needed to inform our efforts as educators in the struggle to maintain equanimity for the arts in schools.

Notes


5. For example, see Heidi H. Jacobs, ed., Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum, 1989).


9. Gail Burnaford, A. April, and C. Weiss, eds., Renaissance in the Classroom:


11. As a Hedw Weis for the Chicago Sun-Times (November 1, 1999) wrote: “Anyone in doubt about the power of art to galvanize a community and create a miraculous, peaceable kingdom would have been transformed into a believer.”


15. As in the mask-making example, the theater company’s goals could be found in both content and teaching strategies. The teacher drew the students through the theater’s creative process of brainstorming, discussion, visualization, creation, and creative play. School goals were reinforced by reading and writing, reflection and collaboration, along with grade-level goals for training recall and analysis.


17. For example, see Robin Fogarty and Judy Stoehr, Integrating Curricula with Multiple Intelligences (Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Professional Development, 1995), which defines musical intelligence as “a primary channel for learning and knowing, sharing and expressing, and perceiving and creating pitch and patterns for the human mind . . . in one classroom, students memorize their multiplication facts by using a steady rhythm and beat” (13) and lists “artistic skills,” such as “painting, film, design, dance, drama, music, sculpture” (28) as separate from “thinking skills” and “critical/analytical evaluative skills” (28), but does not similarly list language arts skills such as writing or articulating. Where process is understood as part of other learning, it is widely misunderstood in the arts.


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James S. Denton Appointed as Executive Director of Heldref Publications

Ambassador Jeanie J. Kirkpatrick, president of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, has announced that James S. Denton has been appointed executive director and chief operating officer of Heldref Publications. “We are delighted and fortunate to have Mr. Denton join our team,” said Ambassador Kirkpatrick, “and we are anxious to make use of his well-documented vision, leadership, and management expertise to help take the organization to new heights.”

Denton previously served as executive director of Freedom House, where he restored fiscal solvency to the organization, dramatically increasing its budget and leading a massive expansion of its international programs and publishing operations. Subsequently, Denton worked as a communications consultant with clients including public broadcasting, several heads of government, and various cultural organizations and think tanks. He has written, edited, and published major works on human rights, democratic development, and terrorism.