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The University of San Francisco

IMAGICATION = IMAGINATION + EDUCATION: WHAT FIFTH GRADERS THINK OF ARTS INTEGRATION IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation Proposal Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Lisa Edsall Giglio
San Francisco
December 2012

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
Dissertation Abstract

Imagication = Imagination + Education: What Fifth Graders Think About
Arts Integration in Public Elementary Schools:

During the 2011-12 school year, a fifth grade class in a diverse San Francisco public elementary school collaborated with the Arts Resources In Action (ARIA) program of the San Francisco Opera's Education Department to create a teacher-guided opera. The students wrote the story, music and lyrics as well as designed and built the sets, props and costumes based on the American Revolution. The classroom teacher chose the topic of the American Revolution, and the students researched this historic event using literary, historical, visual, musical and theatrical methods of exploration and data gathering. Through the medium of opera, the program connected the teacher's chosen curricula to the California State Standards. This dissertation studied the SFO ARIA program by observing the entire process for six months and conducting interviews with a focus group of 14 students, the classroom teacher, and two ARIA teaching artists.

Significant to this study was the inclusion of student voice, an integral variable in implementation of the ARIA program. Few research studies of performing arts programs in schools lead with the voices and experiences of elementary school students. Data collected for this qualitative study included interviews with students and teachers, surveys, and six months of weekly classroom observations. This investigation aims to add to arts-education research that can deepen our understanding of student learning.

The dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Lisa Edsall Giglio________	12/11/12____________
Candidate	Date

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Susan Katz___________	12/11/12____________
Chairperson	
Dr. Emma Fuentes________	12/11/12____________
Dr. Roberto Varea_________	12/11/12____________

For my Kate, my god children, and my Grandma Rose

Yes, we can

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CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

This qualitative study was conducted to explore the experiences of a fifth-grade class within a San Francisco public school working in collaboration with the Arts Resources in Action (ARIA) program of the San Francisco Opera (SFO) Education Department. The SFO ARIA program used opera as a medium of instruction to teach across the school curriculum. A focus group of 14 students within one classroom and their teachers were interviewed regarding the students perceptions of the impact of the ARIA program on their overall learning and academic success. The student-driven process of the program involved student input into all areas of opera creation.

The integration of arts across the curriculum has a clear, proven track record for improving student success (Aprill, 2001; Catterall, Dumais & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Deasy, 2002; Fiske, 1999), student reflection offers an additional perspective for best practice (Boud, Keough & Walker, 1994; Creedon, 1999; Dewey 1938; Mitra, 2009a). The valuing of student “voice” was an inherent facet of the SFO ARIA process. Students were guided in a writing process for the adaptation and construction of a class-developed story based upon an idea or adaptation. These students based their story on the American Revolution.

In discussing the arts in schools, two main frameworks exist that remain at the forefront of conversation for teachers, administrators, students, policy makers and parents alike. One framework conceives of arts as part of every student’s education, and the second as arts-integrated curriculum applied across disciplines. Arts as part of every

student's education places the skills of individual art disciplines at the center of curricular goals. The integration of arts woven into curriculum uses the skills required of an artist to attain knowledge regarding all disciplines (Aprill, 2010; Eisner, 2002). Without a clear understanding of these terms within education, it is bewildering for educators to ask for what they need (Aprill, 2001). In regard to this study, the ARIA program employed artistic strategies developed to deepen and demonstrate student learning across the curricula of language arts, history and social studies plus all four of the visual and performing arts.

One strategy that ARIA has employed is the inclusion of student voice. Including student voice in developing school policies for safety, food, and course offerings has gained momentum in education (Levin, 2000b; Mitra, 2009a; Senge et al., 2000). Students can become better informed regarding the limitations and responsibilities of being part of a rule setting group through collaborating with teachers in the classroom (Boal, 1996; Cook-Sather, 2007; Cushman, 2003; EducationEvolving, 2011). Students know their own experiences and expectations of school and they understand their wants, disappoints, assumptions about education (Gay, 2000). By including students in policy-creating conversation, educators can attain insights of those being provided for (hooks, 2003; Shor, 1996).

SFUSD, along with many national and local education organizations, has been seeking research to assist in developing a clearer understanding of strategies effective in connecting students and teachers with arts education (Kagan, 2009). Additional data are needed to discern the perspectives of students on the process of arts-education integration within classrooms to create engaging connections for students (Aprill, 2010). As a result,

the SFO Education Department has developed partnerships with a number of organizations and schools, including the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD).

In the fall of 2008, the SFO Education Department was established and began training teaching artists. In the spring of 2009, the teaching artists began working within San Francisco public schools. The mission of the ARIA program and the SFO Education Department was to connect the professional artistic and creative elements of opera with classroom curricula. The program was based upon three key principles: (a) a sustained and multistep partnership between educators and teaching artists, (b) a high level of flexibility among educators regarding content and curricular connections, and (c) in-depth professional development for all participating educators (SFO Education Department, 2011).

The ARIA resource guide (SFO Education Department, 2011) articulated methods for creating opera. Planning for the opera included the classroom teacher working with the teaching artist to determine curriculum for inclusion in the opera. Empowering educators to work with the opera teaching artists and their own colleagues to develop connections between opera, the curriculum, and the California State Arts and Academic Standards was a facet of department methods. The methodologies of the department included ongoing growth, refinement, and implementation of arts-education best practice across the curriculum. The ARIA program was committed to active student participation and the inclusion of the student voice in the creation of the opera.

The ARIA program provided a teaching artist who delivered weekly classroom instruction, ran weekly planning meetings with classroom teachers, and throughout the school year led ongoing professional development with both classroom teachers and

other SFO ARIA teaching artists. This individual also served as a coordinator and facilitator of the many resources available to classroom teachers from the SFO Education Department (2011).

The ARIA program offered a range of learning activities for students and teachers. These activities included a visit to the SFO scene shop, a classroom visit by SFO costumers, a classroom visit from opera singers of the SFO Adler program, attending a SFO final dress rehearsal at the opera house, and artistic and technical assistance from production artists of the scene shop working with students and their opera designs. Participation was not required in these activities. The classroom teachers signed up for each activity they desired for their students. This study observed an arts integrated program and the inclusion of student voice in the classroom and ARIA opera making process.

The 2011-12 school year was the first time classroom teachers led the ARIA program within their classrooms, which they were encouraged to do after having the program in their classrooms for three years. The classroom teacher in this study led the program in her class; it was her fourth year with the ARIA program. A fourth-year SFO teaching artist supported the classroom teacher in this transition and subsequently continued to arrange SFO ARIA resources. Teaching artists continued a weekly check-in with fourth-year classroom teachers and conducted classroom visits biweekly in the spring of 2012 to support the opera curriculum selected by the teachers.

Over the 2011-12 school year in which the class created their opera, arts integrated curriculum was manifested using the skills of drama and stagecraft to understand and create the characters in the students' story and to improve their vocal

projection, diction and working with an audience. This led to the story line and text creation. Music was used to further the text and create the tunes and rhythms for the lyrics. Students chose the mood, tone, and pace of the songs prior to working collaboratively with a teaching artist to compose the music. Movement was created after exploring how characters might be feeling or behaving through gestures and movement. With those ideas students created the choreography and, when appropriate, were responsible for leading dance practices and the movement of set pieces and props during shows. Visual arts were applied as students researched, imagined and then demonstrated their understanding of their story with creating and building the set, costumes, props, and the show posters. Presenting their work extended the students' connection to the material into the school community and provided experience in public performance (SFO Education Department, 2011).

The classroom teacher offered all students the opportunity to participate in the study, and 14 students volunteered. These 14 students formed the focus group for this study. The group consisted of 2 Latino, 5 Chinese, 1 Vietnamese and 6 European American students. The majority of these students had previously been in the ARIA program at this school. Data-collection methods for this qualitative study included classroom observations, interviews with the 14 students, as well as interviews with the classroom teacher and the teaching artists working with this class.

For purposes of the study, the following Soundout (Fletcher, 2011) definition of *student voice* was applied: "[The] student voice includes the individual and collective perspectives and actions of young people within the context of learning and education" (p. 1). Soundout is a training and consultation program that has been implemented in

more than 100 schools to increase focus on the student voice and meaningful student involvement in the schools.

The school site granted permission for research that included the collection of student data through interviews and observation from November 2011 to May 2012. The SFO Education Department did not request the research. The researcher, a part-time employee of the SFO Education Department, was not financially compensated to conduct the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to expand arts-education research that includes the experiences and perceptions of student participants working in collaboration with an arts organization employing arts integration actively with students. A focus group of 14 fifth-grade public-school students working with the SFO ARIA program was recruited. The findings could contribute to a clearer understanding of the manner in which arts education may impact student overall learning and offer suggestions for including student voice in the classroom.

The SFO ARIA program's answer to the question of how students obtain greater learning experiences in the arts was the integration of opera elements across subjects (SFO Education Department, 2011). The program was designed to integrate all Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Standards into unit and lesson plans for curricular connections across disciplines. The arts disciplines named in the VAPA standards were music, visual arts, dance, and theatre. Opportunities existed within the ARIA program for including all of these standards in the study of opera through classes focused on English-language development, English-language learners, English-language arts, social

studies, history, science, and mathematics. This qualitative study drew upon the student point of view regarding ways in which the SFO ARIA program affected their overall learning and academic success.

All students benefit from having input into the manner in which they learn (Freire, 1970; hooks, 2003; Shor, 1992). The inclusion of student voice creates a more transparent learning environment, leading students to understand that they are contributing members of their classroom community (Heathcote, 1983; Mitra, 2008). As students are invited to invest in themselves, in the classroom, and the curriculum, they become stakeholders in their own learning (Banks & Banks, 1995; Cushman, 2003; Freire, 1976). Within a transparent learning environment, students and teachers can find points of connection for students to become contributing members of their classroom community rather than simply recipients of information (Boal, 1996; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Freire, 1970). The findings of this qualitative study may have a positive impact on learning practice for teachers and policy makers.

Background and Need for the Study

The current educational environment places a clear emphasis on high-stakes testing, using quantitative data as the primary source for measuring student achievement (Robinson, 2010). Yet quantitative testing alone misses the important dimension of the student experience. Qualitative testing and research can provide insight into student learning that holds different and important data the quantitative testing alone can procure. Furthermore, Deasy (2002) stated that learning and understanding are enriched when students are exposed to and experience the arts. As Director of the Arts Education Partnership from 1995 to 2005, Deasy made his primary contribution to arts education by

producing seminal reports and studies on the positive impact of such education in schools and after-school programs throughout communities. His work continues to impact policy makers and educators around the world (Hardiman, Magsamen, McKhann, & Eilber, 2009).

Numerous reports funded by private, public, and governmental organizations have provided data on learning and positive student growth through the arts and arts programs (Heath & Roach, 1999; Longley, 1999). Quantitative and qualitative studies have clearly identified the value of both integration of the arts across curriculum and teaching of the arts as stand-alone subjects to improve student achievement (Aprill, 2001). According to Heath (2001), whether integrated into the curriculum or taught as stand-alone subjects, the arts can improve student engagement both in and out of school. The focus of Heath's (2000, 2004) work clearly indicated the connection between children practicing the arts in after-school arts programs and their improving in real-world skills. Gordon (2009) contended that art as a learning process immediately transforms students into researchers and participants, enhancing their knowledge and abilities in myriad areas.).

The arts provide accessible outlets for students to share their prior knowledge in class (Wolf, 1999). According to Moses (1990), a culturally responsive education links curriculum, assessment, and instruction to the student experience, language, and culture (i.e., links learning to the prior knowledge of students). A culturally responsive classroom incorporates the life stories of students, their individual dreams and fears, as well as their distinct ways of interacting with the classroom environment (Gay, 2000). It is the responsibility of teachers, parents, and schools to support the development of student belonging within the classroom. Teachers must involve students in the language and

priorities of the class, creating culturally responsive pedagogy (Heath & Mangiola, 1991; hooks, 2003). Cultivating students' sense of belonging to their school community is supported by including the lives and voices of students throughout the classroom and curriculum (Kozol, 2005). Every classroom has a unique culture based on the students and the teacher (Shor, 1996). Arts education provides students opportunities for creative expression and a sense of belonging, both in and out of school (Heath, 1983).

As microcosms of society, schools embody mainstream beliefs. A less frequently articulated suspicion about the use of arts in society is that the arts can serve as a vehicle to question those beliefs (Freire, 1974) and lead to social change (Boal, 1985). For example, the United Farm Workers movement in the 1960s used the arts to impact business practices in California by making theater that educated the farm workers and the product purchasing public to change the practices of farm owners (Huerta, 1992). Poetry, murals, music, plays, spoken word, sculpture, novels, and dance are examples of art forms that have been used to instigate conversation, reflection, and change within communities (Robinson, 2001). Without access to the arts in schools, students of today - the society of tomorrow - are removed from related dialogue within the classroom, the school, and community.

If the arts are not funded and consequently not present in schools, they cannot serve to challenge or further hone institutional or societal beliefs (Boal, 1996; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). In response to the lack of funding for arts education and the persistence of high-stakes quantitative testing to assess student achievement, Haimson (2012) asserted that it must never be forgotten that learning manifests itself through human interaction, inspiration, creative thought, and individual effort. Repetitive standardized testing

thwarts this process. Yet educators know that human interaction, inspiration, creative thought and individual effort are skills needed for students to become productive members of society.

Arts education is now recognized as a "bridge," connecting education opportunities to the skills perceived as needed for the 21st century (Warrick, 2011). The current trend in skilled labor is to value workers with the problem-solving skills of an artist (National Governors Association, 2009). Skills suggested for achieving success in work and life in the 21st century include: observation, critique, team building, negotiation, and imaginative problem solving. While these skills are applied in studying the arts, they are not required in high-stakes quantitative testing (Eisner, 2002). Raising the level of awareness surrounding the proven benefits of arts education for teachers and parents is crucial for arts education to be consistently funded (Woronkowicz, 2007; Longley, 1999; Winick, 2008; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

Exacerbating the problem of consistent funding for the arts is the ambivalent relationship the U.S has with the arts which informs whether or not the arts are viewed as critical to education (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). The United States provides substantially less federal funding in support of the arts than most other first-world countries (Woronkowicz, 2007), which implies that the arts are not considered critical to education in the U.S. That dollar amount directly impacts who in the U.S. has access to the arts and feeds the argument that the arts are a product consumed only by the rich (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). This level of exclusion promotes the idea that the arts have "cultural capital" (i.e., an individual connected to the arts often carries societal status). To participate in or witness the arts is reserved for those who can afford the cost and the time

with a comfort level with the arts. To attain comfort with the arts, an education in the arts is needed. If all people had access to the arts, such status would not be attached, potentially changing society's support for who makes art and who witnesses the arts (Freire, 1984). This division for access to the arts is felt in California public schools today.

In 2011, California K-12 public schools lacked consistency in the quantity and quality of arts education required by law (California Alliance for Arts Education, 2011). While not unique to California, the history of arts education in California schools has a long and "checkered" past (LaFee, 2008). In 1970, the California Ryan Act of 1970 (as cited in Woodworth, Gallagher, & Guha, 2007) eliminated training requirements in the arts for elementary-school teachers. In 1978, a property-tax cap was passed resulting in funding reductions for the arts and physical education when budgets were moved from local to state control.

In 1992, the Local Arts Partnership Program implemented an arts education reporting system that documented the lack of arts in schools and began restoring arts education within California public schools. It was not until 2004 that elementary-school teachers within the State of California again received arts training, but the training was delivered solely at a cursory level. This perfunctory requirement maintained the gap between teacher training and the disciplines educators are required to teach, and this gap persists today (California Alliance for Arts Education, 2011).

The California Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Standards named music, theatre, visual arts and dance as the art subjects to be taught in K-12 public schools in 2000. In 2001, VAPA standards were introduced as part of the California K-12 grade-

level standards as a direct strategy to ensure all students received adequate instruction in the arts (Taylor, 2004). California was not alone in articulating these arts disciplines as fundamental components of the education goals for K-12 public education. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001), also known as the National Educational Act of 2001 but was signed into law during 2002, also named the same arts standards as essential to K-12 public education.

To support the VAPA standards and combat the lack of arts education in schools, the SFUSD implemented the Arts Education Master Plan (AEMP) during 2008. On the cover of the AEMP (Trimis & Stauter, 2008) is the mantra "Every school, every student, every day" (p. 1). LaFee (2008) interviewed the artistic director of SFUSD who reported that the arts are desired, often discussed, and valued, yet still remain in desperate need of greater structure, implementation, and funding. The guiding principle of the AEMP (Trimis & Stauter, 2008) was to serve as a "map" for San Francisco schools as they worked to integrate the arts into the daily curriculum for all students. The AEMP stated that "all students deserve both access to and equity in arts education" (p. 3).

Developing the AEMP involved eight months of research, interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Over 1,500 student opinions informed the document. The steering committee was devoted during those eight months to determining which schools had arts education programs, how they were being implemented, and how many schools were receiving arts training for teachers. Major inconsistencies among schools were found. A number of schools did not incorporate the VAPA standards; some had no arts programs at all; and other schools had programs that included the standards in the four required arts disciplines. Of principals surveyed, 77% named time and/or money as the most

significant obstacle to comprehensive and sequential arts education (Trimis & Stauter, 2008).

The AEMP (Trimis & Stauter, 2008) steering committee determined how schools could apply the state arts education standards and whether teachers were receiving arts training. Fewer than 2% of SFUSD schools provided training in the arts for teachers. The AEMP provided a scaffold for a sequential, comprehensive arts education program. Unfortunately, the desire for a program within the SFUSD did not guarantee its complete implementation or its longevity. In 2004, the California governor declared March as the arts-in-education month, and yet during the same year, left arts education with no dedicated budget (California Alliance for Arts Education, 2011).

In order to provide data that made transparent both the process and possible personal and academic gains to students, the following research questions guided this research study. The questions were structured to facilitate students and teachers in recounting their understanding of the gains, goals and steps of working with an arts program in their classroom.

Research Questions and Theoretical Rationale

This study asked the following research questions:

1. How do the fifth-grade students of the school site assess the impact of participating in the SFO ARIA program on their overall learning and academic success?
2. How do the classroom teachers and teaching artists assess the impact of student experiences with the SFO ARIA program?

3. How would the students, classroom teachers, and teaching artists alter the SFO ARIA program to enrich its impact on students?

The theoretical rationale of this qualitative study was based upon the work of the American educator and education philosopher, John Dewey, and the British educator, Dorothy Heathcote. Dewey (1934) and Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) viewed education as fundamentally an arts integrated learning process predicated on student voice. Both believed that education begins with active learning that engages the previous knowledge of students as a starting point for new learning (Dewey, 1916; Heathcote, 1991; Wagner, 1976). When discussing contemporary arts education, these two luminaries are at the heart of the conversation and inform education reform involving progressive education.

Both Eisner (2002) and Greene (2001) concurred with Dewey (1934) and Heathcote (1983) as to the processes of witnessing, reflecting upon, creating, and responding to art as being distinct experiences that compound, trigger, invigorate, and strengthen learning. Dewey's (1938) theories focused on the following central ideas: (a) education is social in nature; (b) school is a forum for students to practice living within the world; (c) clearly articulated "hands-on," project-based learning creates experiences from which children build knowledge; and (d) the role of the teacher is one of a facilitator enabling students to integrate learning into life outside the classroom. Dewey's (1902) theories are reflected in the philosophy, actions, and goals of Heathcote. Heathcote and Bolton (1995) explained the "mantle of the expert" as "a system for learning through the active imagination and inquiry method" (p. 3). The principles and stages required are: (a) creating community within the classroom, (b) treating learners as experts within the

classroom, (c) incorporating core subject matter around a central problem, and (d) employing students as researchers and problem solvers.

Heathcote (1991) used drama as the medium of instruction (Wagner, 1976). In her method, the classroom teacher created an enterprise incorporating core subject material and gave students a problem to solve. The students then worked on the project as a group, developing a breadth of knowledge. That project created opportunities to explore and research their curriculum and, in turn, created opportunities for cross-curricular learning. Heathcote described her work as a dramatic-inquiry approach to teaching and learning. She advocated for providing students with a problem that required a range of artistic skills acquired through research and application of core curriculum. The most unique aspect of the Heathcote methodology was that within the drama created, the teacher remained "in role," or inside the drama rather than an observer (p. 23). The teacher was a member of the team solving the problem. Both students and the teacher were asking questions that prompted research and solution construction (Heathcote & Bolton, 2003).

Both Heathcote (1991) and Dewey (1934) believed that through direct, experiential opportunities to engage the imagination in school, students were invited into their learning, but not force-fed information with no context or relationship to the body of knowledge they apply to their lives. Dewey (1916) and Heathcote (1983) prioritized and practiced project-based learning, reflection, critical analysis, and active learning in the arts as key to teaching and learning. Eisner (1998) and Greene (2000), like Dewey (1902) and Heathcote (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995), posited that the reflective element of an educational experience is crucial to ensure the emergence of student voice.

Opportunities for reflection could occur in writing, class discussion, assessment, presentation, critique of work, and during arts learning experiences. Dewey and Heathcote practiced holistic education as serving the whole student in preparation for enjoying and maneuvering their way through a thoughtful and purposeful life.

Significance of the Study

The educational significance of this qualitative case study was to add needed research providing voice to students and to better understand students' experiences of school. The aim of this study was to provide a voice to fifth-grade students collaborating with the SFO ARIA program in their classroom. A very small body of research focuses on students' experiences working with performing-arts programs within elementary schools (Catterall, 2002). The leading voices informing this case study were those of a fifth-grade class within an urban, ethnically diverse, public elementary school located in San Francisco, California.

As educators strategize to stem the crisis for California K-12 public school education outcomes, they are looking for curriculum that is both engaging and educational. The crisis is upon us and one piece of evidence is during the school year 2010-11 25% of high school students in California did not graduate (Jung, 2011). Our students need us to do better than that and lay the ground work and systems for students to attain a progressive education.

Definition of Terms

Aesthetic experience is the process or product of deliberately arranging elements and fulfilling an expression of emotions while employing the union of sense, need, impulse, and action delivered in a manner that evokes the senses or emotions. It

encompasses a diverse range of authentic human activities, creations, and modes of expression (Dewey, 1934).

Arts integration of curriculum is a "powerful vehicle to cross the boundaries of core subjects and arts concepts, affective and cognitive modes of expression, form and content, processes and products, [and] the self and the world" (Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2001, p. xxxiii).

Best practice refers to serious, thoughtful, informed, responsible, state-of-the-art teaching (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005, p. iv).

Critical thinking skills facilitate (a) a recognition of problems; (b) a workable means for solving those problems; (c) the gathering and marshaling of pertinent information; (d) recognition of unstated assumptions and values; (e) comprehension and use of language with accuracy, clarity, and discrimination; (f) interpretation; (g) the appraisal of evidence and the evaluation of statements; (h) recognition of the existence of logical relationships between propositions; (i) warranted conclusions and generalizations; (j) the testing of generalizations and conclusions; (k) the reconstruction of personal patterns of belief on the basis of wider experience; and (l) accurate judgments surrounding the events of daily life (Glaser, 1941, p. 6).

Culturally responsive practice is comprised of (a) positive perspectives of parents and families; (b) communication of high expectations; (c) learning within the context of culture; (d) student-centered instruction; (e) culturally mediated instruction; (f) reshaped curriculum; and (g) teachers as facilitators (Gay, 2000).

Imagination is the ability to conceive of that which is not (MacCambridge, 2004).

Progressive education is student preparation for active participation in a democratic society; preparation via a focus on the social, emotional, academic, cognitive, and physical development of students by nurturing and supporting their natural curiosity and innate desire to learn; fostering the internal motivation of students; and responsiveness to the developmental needs of students by fostering respectful relationships between teachers and students and encouraging the active participation of students in their own learning (Dewey, 1899, 1913, 1916, 1938).

Reflection as learning is an integral aspect of expanding knowledge and a combination of prior knowledge, an engaged activity, and time assigned to consider and discuss both the emotional and cognitive impact of experiencing the engaged activity. Preparation requires an outline of the aims and structures of an activity, the practice of the skills required, and an introduction to applicable resources (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1994).

The *student voice* refers to youth sharing their opinions of problems and their potential solutions (Mitra, 2009a).

Summary

The State of California has the goal and the mandate to offer the resources, teachers, professional development, and scheduled time for the disciplines of drama, music, visual arts, and dance throughout K-12 public schools. (Trimis & Stauter, 2008). Since the late 1970s, San Francisco K-12 public schools have not consistently provided arts education. Inadequate student achievement within the state of California prompted investigation into solutions outside the high-stakes tested core subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics. Empirical data have indicated that the arts, both integrated

into existing curriculum and as stand-alone disciplines, can improve student achievement (Artsedge, 2011; Deasy, 2002; Heath 2000).

Supporters of arts education rallied to formulate clear content to achieve the standards established by the 2001 VAPA Standards. However, by 2004, the SFUSD had not observed a notable change in arts education resources made available to schools and teachers. That year the SFUSD created the AEMP, a plan to provide arts education for "every school, every student, every day." The SFUSD continues to strive for the daily inclusion of the VAPA standards for K-12 public school students (Trimis & Stauter, 2008).

SFUSD invited a number of organizations, including the SFO, to advance the integration of arts education in participating classrooms. The relationship between the SFUSD and the SFO ARIA program provided a unique classroom model of using opera as a medium of instruction. This medium is applied across curriculum over a semester or an entire school year with the support of classroom visits by teaching artists to co-teach with the classroom teacher, weekly planning meetings and professional development throughout the school year. In this qualitative study, the voices of students and teachers highlighted the experiences of the fifth graders collaborating with the SFO ARIA program in an attempt to further effective strategies for arts education integration across the curriculum.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examines arts education research and a body of work focused on student perspectives when working with an arts program across curriculum in school. The overarching themes discussed in this literature review explore student centered learning, student voice, and learning in the arts and their integration across curriculum. This qualitative study is informed by the education philosophies of Dewey (1897) and Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995), both of whom are considered to be followers of and contributors to progressive education. Both viewed student voice and the arts as key factors in education and imagination as a tool to achieve engaged learning.

The problem of interest for this qualitative study was the inclusion of the student experience and the perceptions of students in analyzing the impact of an arts programs within their classroom. Scores of educators advocate for inclusion of the student voice to create classrooms reflective of the lives and experiences of students (Mitra, 2009b; Robinson, 2011; Rudduck & Demetriou, 2003). Maxine Greene (2012), the renowned educational philosopher and founder of the Maxine Greene Foundation for Social Imagination at the Arts and Education Department at Teachers College of Columbia and the Maxine Greene Center for Aesthetics, Education, and Inquiry, postulated that when the ideas and experiences of students were reflected in the curriculum and classroom, students would invest more deeply in their learning. This qualitative study featured the student perspectives of the ARIA program within one classroom.

Student-Centered Learning

Dewey (1902) deconstructed formal education from the viewpoint of the student. He described learning as fluid, ever changing, active, emotional, sensual, unified, and personal. He described the student experience of education as sedentary with fixed goals, logical, rational, segregated in its approach to individual disciplines, and deeply impersonal. The overarching goal of Dewey was to build bridges between both paradigms to incorporate the experiences of learning and schooling. He wrote that students needed to be at the center of what they were taught through including their prior knowledge and creating engaging, active relevant curriculum for students. Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1999) used drama as the medium of instruction for bridging student knowledge and the clear curricular goals set by the classroom teacher and keeping students at the center of learning.

Key to student-centered learning for both Dewey (1897) and Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) were imagination and reflection. Also required for student-centered learning was student voice as crucial to constructing connections for learning as active and conducive to creating, with engaged students and relevant curriculum. Dewey contended that imagination was inherently part of creating and engaging with curriculum. He also planned time into the school day for student reflection with student participation as a requirement. Both Dewey and Heathcote considered reflection an essential process for learning (Dyck, 2004).

Heathcote (Wagner, 1976) shared Dewey's belief and reported that if teachers connected students to curriculum, gradual learning would take place.

Dewey (1938) wrote:

> Many so-called projects are of such a short time span and are entered upon for such casual reason, that extension of acquaintance with the facts and principals is at a minimum. In short, they are too trivial to be educative. (pp. 442-443).

According to Dewey (1897), "Education, therefore, is a process for living and not a preparation for future living" (p. 78). This criterion for learning also placed student voice at the center of Dewey (1902) and Heathcote's (1983) work. Heathcote took Dewey's principles to a more detailed level in classroom pedagogy. Heathcote (1991) outlined an optimal school structure by stating, "In school we try to bring three things together: the matter of the mind of the people, the matter of the being of people, and the matter of the doing for the people" (p. 121).

Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) introduced to her students a theoretical client with a problem. The class, as a company, assigned roles and job descriptions as if they were experts in their roles. The students solved the problem using the knowledge they acquired in roles such as a scribe, mathematician, interior designer, politician, architect, sanitation expert, scientist, historian, cook, urban planner, visual artist, or other essential community member. For example, the students might be asked to feed a hungry town or defend a medieval township. All roles and job descriptions related directly to the predetermined curriculum. The students applied research and the arts to the exploration and resolution of the problem. Working in small groups and as a whole at times, they created a workable solution to the problem.

Conducting her work within the story of the students, Heathcote's (Heathcote and Bolton, 2003) position was very unique; most teachers felt more comfortable as outside observers in group learning situations (Palmer, 1998), as is more compatible with their

training. This allowed the classroom teacher to be the regulator of quality behavior, attending to the problem through the curriculum and establishing a sense of purpose with all tasks. The teacher guided the class to assess the problem in terms of the past, present, and future as they work to develop a resolution. This was progressive education incarnate.

The work and goals of Dewey (1899) and Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1999) overlapped extensively and provided a rationale for employing student voice in this study. For both Dewey (1897) and Heathcote (1991), the primary goals for education were to instill lifelong learning and critical-thinking skills. Heathcote (1983) believed that drama in education served as practice for living when she wrote, “In drama the complexity of living is removed temporarily into this protected bower so that children can not only learn and explore it, but also enjoy it” (p. 701).

The Student Voice

The student’s point of view can be expressed through the inclusion of student voice. Student voice can be elicited through student surveys, through student organizations, through students positioned on education boards, and in the daily classroom practice. Revealing student voice is another tool for educators to investigate ways of increasing student engagement, learning, and critical thinking skills (Cushman 2003; Heath, 2001; Mitra, 2005).

Gay (2000) similarly found that students benefit from a voice in the construction of their own learning community. Gay is nationally and internationally known for her scholarship in multicultural education, particularly as related to curriculum design, staff development, classroom instruction, and the intersection of culture, race, ethnicity,

teaching, and learning. Sharing Gay's opinion is Banks (2004), a distinguished educator and author is commonly referred to as "the father of multicultural education." He also contended that when students become stakeholders in their own learning, they tend to fully invest in their education. Cushman (2003), founder of What Kids Can Do, has devoted over 20 years to adolescent learning around the world and agreed with Banks and Banks (1995) that student investment in their school work can increase their confidence. Given the multicultural demographics of California K-12 public-school students, the inclusion of student voice is worth investigating further to develop engaging learning environments.

Securing time for students to contribute their reflections regarding their learning provides students agency and engagement with curriculum and fellow students (Burnaford et al., 2001; Cook-Sather, 2007; Heath, Soep, & Roach, 1998; Mitra, 2003). The inclusion of the student voice requires a different type of class preparation for teachers and retraining time may create hesitation for teachers to include planned time for fleshing out the voices of students (EducationEvolving, 2011).

While student voice in the classroom is considered essential by many (Dewey, 1916; Levin, 2000a; Mitra, 2003), it is not common to include the student voice in K-12 public schools within the United States (Mitra, 2008). Unfortunately, many teachers, parents and policy makers do not trust students' ability and desire to contribute rigorous suggestions to their educational structure and content (Cushman, 2003; Palmer, 1998). Furthermore, teachers are not ordinarily trained in how to effectively collaborate with teachers (Creedon, 1999). An additional obstacle to the inclusion of student voice is the widely

held belief that teachers are the authority in the classroom and students should simply listen rather question the teachers (Gay, 2000).

Many of these common concerns are based on fears regarding students potentially monopolizing the conversation. In tandem with that fear is the idea that students are unable to contribute to organizing work in subject areas they do not yet fully understand (Delpit, 1995). Despite these critiques, the inclusion of student voice within classrooms has found a place in educational conversations and does not need to shift the overall direction of education content away from teachers (Richardson, 2001). Opportunities for including student voice within learning environments are endless (Fielding, 2004; Rudduck, & Demetriou, 2003). Moreover, students' skills for succeeding beyond the classroom are informed, in part, by skills developed in school. Fletcher (2011) and EducationEvolving (2011) reported that incorporating the student voice increased the likelihood of school graduation.

Methods for Engaging Student Voice

Shor (1996) used student voice with students in negotiating the format and approach to content appropriate for the class level. Shor posited that where developmentally appropriate students can and should contribute to school goals for learning and assessment. Similar to Dewey (1897), Shor (1992) believed that education involves practicing the skills students will need to negotiate the world outside the classroom while addressing curriculum content. Shor named areas in which students could productively participate in the power dynamics of the classroom, including classroom organization, dissemination of information, transparent evaluation of student work and connecting curriculum with real life and personal interests. Shor's list regarding

institutional relationships included helping to develop policies that affect student life, school structure and school goals.

Boal’s (1992) approach to student participation in classroom dynamics used tools for training all members of a classroom to participate in a conscious manner. His practice of honoring all community voices translated directly to a classroom setting. Boal's (1985) games can be played in class collaboratively to practice an awareness of the power dynamics in life and school. The idea that students are not passive is elemental in developing the student role of negotiating their learning environments. Both teachers and students can develop a sense of responsibility for inclusion of the student voice. Boal coined the term “spect-actor,” implying that an audience is not passive; all parties can contribute to the outcome of the work/story, or in this case, the development of classroom practices. With regard to elementary and secondary school students, the results of numerous studies point directly to effectiveness of the inclusion of student voice to improve student engagement and learning (Eisner, 2002; Levin, 2000b, Mitra 2009b).

Eisner (1998) posited that student voice is realized when student work is on the walls of the classroom and in the halls of the school. Eisner (2002) originally trained as a visual artist and devoted 50 years to working within discipline-based arts education. As an emeritus professor of art and education at the Stanford School of Education, he contended that students who participate in the arts act and feel better both in and out of school. He sought to establish that arts education is crucial to education and directly addressed the assertion that student voice is powerful and positively affects student learning. Eisner wrote, “The arts, as vehicles through which such inscriptions occur, enable us to inspect more carefully our own ideas, whether those ideas emerge in the

form of language, music or vision" (p. 11). He viewed student voice as an essential element of arts education.

British educators, Rudduck and Flutter (2004), devoted decades to establishing the vital role of student voice in constructing learning communities. Rudduck and Fielding presented categories in which student voice had a positive impact for students, namely: organizational, personal, pedagogic, and political. From an organizational point of view, the gain for students was a sense of membership within the classroom and a positive view of school. On a personal level, students developed an increased sense of self through the collective construction of the classroom environment. Pedagogically, students learned to assist in managing their learning progress. Politically, students realized that their actions and opinions can impact policy. In creating methods for student reflections, Rudduck and Demetriou (2003) employed the student voice via students writing on their experiences. Similar to Dewey (1913), Heath (2004), and Heathcote (2002), Rudduck and Demetriou (2004) believed that learning is manifested over time as students made connections and reflected on their efforts.

Hetland, Winner, Veenema, and Sheridan (2007) structured their work with the belief that modeling an artist's studio required students to develop language to reflect upon their work as a group and created an opportunity for them to work at their own level, ask questions, and engage in discussion. They argued that studio work created a learning environment within which students demonstrated their learning and they developed seven main points of focus. "Developing craft" was attained with the use, maintenance and storage of supplies. "Exploring and stretching" training occurred while students applied a range of possible solutions prior to defining the final answer to a

problem. Students practiced planning and imagining while “Envisioning next steps” of potential solutions. “Verbal expression” transpired as students were critiquing work and researching solutions. While “Observing the work of others,” scholarship evolved with final critiques and sharing observations about the work of others. Through “Reflecting,” students expanded their thinking by responding to their own work and the work of others. Pursuing “Understanding the world of their discipline,” students gained knowledge from conducting research and experiencing trial and error in their discipline. These seven points of focus required the inclusion and development of student voice.

Fielding (2004) reported that including student voice was crucial in constructing learning communities that provided comprehensive education and added that attaining the inclusion of student voice is fraught with obstacles. These obstacles included students not feeling free to speak directly without worry of repercussions, or having to “perform” when they speak, and finding a school location where students and teachers can truly debate. In his observations, a power dynamic in most schools involved spaces where it is assumed teachers lead which are separate from those in which students can partake in debate. For Fielding, neither of those spaces reassured dynamics for frank exchange. His hope was that schools would shift to what he called "radical collegiality," (p.296) allowing students to have a place for balanced discourse. Similarly, the work of Gay (2000), hooks (2003), Delpit (1995), Freire (1976) focused on creating inclusive environments by being culturally reflective and relevant to students so that students participated fully as stakeholders in their education (Preble & Taylor, 2009).

Levin (2000a) also argued that education reform required inclusion of student voice for comprehensive and/or lasting student improvement. He opined that Canadian

schools outperform those of other countries due, in part, to the high level of student motivation. Levin agreed with the Canadian Research Council that Canadian students performed well because they (a) are assigned worthwhile tasks, (b) are given autonomy in their approach to their assignments, (c) gain clear feedback from teachers, (d) work with focused peers, and (e) have many opportunities to learn and improve. Levin focused on improving the connection between theory, research, and teaching practice to inform education policy. His work has been applied in addressing urban poverty, inequality in the access to education, and the large-scale improvement of Canadian schools (Levin, 2000b). An array of methods and rationales support school administration creating pathways for the inclusion of student voice in schools.

School Climate and Research

One aspect of school climate is the preparation undertaken by a school so that it is equipped for a change such as integrating curriculum. Creedon (1999) conducted an evaluative case study to observe a district-wide constructivist process to integrate curriculum from *Sounds of Learning* (SOL), and curriculum and pedagogy developed by the Opera Company of Philadelphia at Art Form High School. The program within Art Form High School called, *Arts and Heritage Small Learning Community* (SLC), was chosen by the school district as an example of a school program that realized constructivist goals of teaching. Two operas were created at the school during the one year of the study.

Creedon's (1999) findings reported that even when the administration of a school committed to making pedagogical changes in the school culture, obstacles arose at every level. Making time to announce the shift proved deeply disruptive in implementing change, leaving little or no time to review the pedagogical impacts for the school. Sufficient time

was not allocated to confer on approaches with teachers. Additionally, the school did not provide campus-wide discussions for students to understand impending changes. Creedon concluded that all parties must be prepared and brought into the process in order to achieve significant change in school culture.

Similar to Creedon's (1999) study, Dyk (2004) found the work of integrating curriculum into schools had constraints based in three major categories, the teachers' lack of knowledge about the program, the demands of the administration, and the teachers' lack of education and knowledge of the arts. For Dyk's study, these differences created a divisive force among the teachers. The extremes of which were some teachers did not engage in arts integrated curriculum and others invested greatly in the mandated arts integration strategy.

Preble and Gordon (2011) researched school climate improvement and student leadership development within 42 public schools in Sullivan County, Tennessee. Similar to Shor (1996), Preble and Gordon viewed K-12 public schooling within the United States as founded on a power imbalance between students and teachers. This traditional dynamic does not support student empowerment within the classroom or position students to learn the active skills needed for participating in a democratic society (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992). Their aim was to connect youth leadership, social justice, and civic engagement. Preble and Taylor (2009) asserted that a significant reduction in school dropout rates will not transpire until student voice becomes integral to the school climate.

Numerous studies address the importance of including student voice (Cushman, 2003; Levin, 2000b; Mitra, 2008; Rudduck & Fielding, 2004) in constructing learning environments; however, within arts education very few studies actually incorporate

students' opinions into the research. Porteous (2003) and Rossi (1997) conducted arts education studies focused on embedding the perspectives and opinions of students in the results. Porteous (2003) examined student relationships to theatre, and Rossi (1997) looked at student relationships to opera.

Rossi (1997) researched a collaboration between The Opera Project of the Metropolitan Opera of New York City and public elementary schools across the country. Rossi's study reflected on the work of John Dewey as the prominent education philosopher in her study. The participating schools were in Tucson, Arizona, were 75% Title I and 60% minority, with a primarily Latino student body. Rossi worked with bilingual classes and conducted observations during the 1994-95 school year.

Rossi's (1997) ethnographic case study involved data collection from student participants through informal interviews, documents and artifacts. The artifacts included student work in the forms of text, reading, writing, singing, lyric writing, acting, movement, and visual arts that were created during time allocated to opera creation. Rossi included notes from her daily journal and formal interviews with the classroom teacher in the data collection. Student work was woven throughout the body of her dissertation. Rossi concluded that the opera process was a positive, inclusive, student-centered, and inquiry-based approach to learning across the curriculum that created a safe environment for both student and teachers of academic integration with the arts.

Porteous (2003) conducted a qualitative study based upon semi structured and open-ended interviews using participatory techniques. She incorporated a technique allowing data gathering and analysis to occur in a highly collaborative and interdependent way between the interviewer and each of the five male interviewees; thus, both the

participants and researcher could benefit from the research process. Porteous asked the research question, "To what extent do young people involved in drama perceive and/or value it as a means of coming to understanding self?" (p. 1). Participant interviews were audiotaped and detailed field notes were recorded to triangulate the data in the analysis process.

Porteous (2003) concluded that the five student participants in her study did not question the value of drama as a means of gaining self-understanding. In fact, her participants were quite aware of the value, enthusiastically and candidly discussing its value without categorizing their experiences. Porteous presented the following three themes: the social aspect of drama, the safe place drama can create, and the affective value of performance for the participants.

The voices of participants were prominent in the Porteous (2003) study. She referred to Heathcote throughout her study, and wrote, "Heathcote supports drama as a method through which young people may fall into their genuineness" (p. 111). Reflecting also on the work of Dewey, Porteous believed that aesthetics involve lived, internally generated responses to an experience rather than purely external observation. Through their drama experiences with performance and the practice of working toward performance, participants in the Porteous study stated they gained self-esteem; self-confidence; and, ultimately, enhanced self-respect.

The Arts

Catterall, Dumais, and Hampden-Thompson (2012) reported on the findings of four longitudinal arts-integrated studies. They found a wide achievement gap between students with low experience in arts education and those with high experience, regardless

of economic status differences. Substantial evidence confirmed that students could gain knowledge through the arts and the integration of arts into curriculum (Deasy, 2002; Heath, 2001). Winick (2008) described the arts as “basic in a purely educational sense. . .They give meaning to learning . . . an important vehicle for problem solving, higher order thinking, flexibility, persistence and cooperation” (p. 2).

Learning Integration

In 2002, the AEP (as cited in Deasy, 2002) summarized 62 research studies taken from a variety of journals spanning the four arts disciplines of dance, drama, visual arts, and music. The research further validated the connection between the arts and learning and offered suggestions for curricular and instructional practice. The compendium comprises studies demonstrating that arts learning boosted academic skills, such as basic and advanced literacy and numeracy skills.

What is Arts Learning?

Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles (1999) observed more than 2,000 pupils attending public elementary and middle schools. These researchers asked the following three questions: What is arts learning? Does it extend to learning in other school subjects? What conditions in schools support this learning? Burton et al. found a positive relationship between involvement with the arts and academic achievement. They described success as a demonstration of the creative and flexible thinking that allowed students to solve problems from various perspectives. For example, language arts skills were fully engaged in the performing arts, which required a combination of thought and action. The skills of writing, listening, speaking, movement, critical thinking,

memorization, team building, and negotiating are minimum requirements within the performing arts (Heath et al., 1998).

Burton et al. (1999) implemented methods of data collection that were both qualitative and quantitative in nature, involving students, faculty, and staff. Primary suggestions from the findings considered arts integration of disciplines were dynamic and interactive. In other words, when seeking a transfer between the arts and core curriculum, consider that "disciplines serve each other [and] that transfer is more interdependent than we currently consider it" (p. 43). Burton et al. concluded that the arts can serve as curriculum partners with other disciplines and contribute their own richness to the learning process. Catterall (2002) reiterated that arts learning and arts integration serve each other and enhance overall learning.

Research on arts learning and arts integration has highlighted a number of skills and opportunities accessible to students only through the experience of arts education (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999; Heath & Roach 1999; Wolf, 1999). Eisner (2002) developed the following list of 10 unique aspects of arts education:

1. They teach good judgment about qualitative relationships.
2. They teach that problems can have more than one solution.
3. They teach that arts celebrate multiple perspectives.
4. They teach that in complex forms of problem solving, purposes are seldom fixed but change with circumstances and opportunity.
5. They teach that neither words in the literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know.
6. They teach that small differences can have large effects.

7. They teach students to think through and within a material.
8. They teach children to say what cannot be said.
9. They enable students to have experience[s] they can have from no other source.
10. They are a symbol to the young, when included in the school curriculum, of what adults believe is important. (pp. 70–92)

Why Do Arts Matter?

Wolf (1999) followed four classes creating an opera over a one year period. The following two study questions were asked: (a) “Why do arts matter?” and (b) “Under what conditions do the arts create learning?” (p. 92). Student voice was prevalent throughout the study, which tracked the differences between students collaborating in opera interactions and those collaborating in non-opera contexts. The research also tracked longitudinal changes in collaborative interaction within the opera process. Wolf concluded that collaboration over time leads to deeper problem resolution. Students strove for quality answers when they are asked to revisit problems as a group. Wolf suggested that further research is needed to answer the question, “What is it about sustained and coherent collaboration that supports the development of a taste for more than convenient solutions or a capacity for understanding complex meanings?” (p. 98).

Heath (1995) conducted research including decades of qualitative and quantitative data on the positive impacts of after-school arts groups within a range of communities around the world. Student learning was made visible over time; students were found to apply their knowledge and deepen their interests when their ideas were included in arts programs. Heath and Roach (1999) provided examples of strong programs that exhibited

a consistent and clear vision of their work. The program goals had clear implementation procedures in place and included student voice in the development of policy.

Others have contributed context about why the arts matter. Greene (2012) founded the Maxine Greene Foundation, an arts foundation encompassing Eisner's (2002) view of the educational value of the arts. The Foundation espouses the belief that education is more than schooling; it is a process enabling individuals to develop their talents to create a more just social order and build meaningful societal contributions. The mission statement of her foundation reads, "The foundation directs its primary attention to the intersections among various modes of social action and engagements with the arts. Social imagination most often finds expression in diverse art forms: film, literature, theatre, and dance" (p.1).

Curriculum Integration

Aprill (2010), founder of the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), stated arts integration is "teaching and learning in which arts learning and other academic learning are connected in ways in which the arts learning and the other academic learning are both deepened" (p. 7). Arts-based curriculum provides direct opportunities for multimodal learning, whether kinesthetic, verbal, or visual, in conjunction with frameworks for ongoing assessment as a learning tool (Burnaford et al., 2001). Rationale for arts-based curriculum is based upon the tenet that the arts enhance student learning across subject areas. Winick (2008) reported that intellect, emotion and physical skills are all used in creating meaning when integrating curriculum.

Opportunities for Learning Through the Arts and Implementing Arts Integrated Curriculum

The United States and most first-world countries have turned to the Kennedy Center of Washington, DC and the Lincoln Center of New York for over 30 years to find information on the arts and education. As data grows and technology reaches out to more people and places, these institutions have expanded what they offer teachers by providing a greater range of opportunities for professional development at their facilities and on their websites. They now catalog and connect lesson plans, organizations and research on arts integrated learning (Artsedge, 2011). Many smaller institutions are progressing in arts integrated work in schools across the country. The Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) (2011) is a rare organization serving both 5,000 K-12 students with fully integrated arts programs implemented by classroom teachers and teaching artists, while also providing professional development to 325 teachers.

Arts for All, K-12 programs, sponsored by the Los Angeles County Office of Education in California are grounded in the following four goals: (a) to establish a strong foundation and deepened school-district capacity to implement arts education, (b) to improve the quality of teaching and learning, (c) to create and empower advocates and conduct ongoing research, and (d) to ensure sustainable funding partnerships for art education. During the 2012-13 school year, 54 of 81 public school districts within Los Angeles County, as well as 15 charter schools, will be part of the Arts for All program, which will serve 582, 000 students (Phillips, 2012).

Local arts-integrated learning programs have increased through the Alameda County Office of Education, through the Alliance for Arts Leadership. This organization

has created a number of arts-integrated programs that include multi-year training for 42 schools and teachers applying integrated instructional frameworks and curriculum building. One high school project was called "Celebrating the American Family Through Art" at Newark Memorial High School. Students created visual and written narratives of their families based upon interviews and old photographs. Linking oral history, literacy, and visual arts skills, the students provided insight into the lives of their families and discovered family legacies through stories and digitally restored family photos (Narcisco, 2012). This is a simple example of a local district engaging in formative arts integration that incorporated the voice of students in the process and the product of the students' work.

Through the Alameda County of Education Office, teachers can attain an Integrated Learning Specialist Program certificate. This provides:

> K-12 teachers and teaching artists research-based frameworks and practice-proven strategies for supporting culturally-responsive arts-integrated teaching across the curriculum. Teachers participate in teacher action research and are provided with tools and knowledge to apply ongoing formative and summative performance based assessment. (Alameda County of Education, 2012).

The strategies and goals of the integrated learning specialist program are mirrored in the goals set down by the SFSUD for K-12 education in San Francisco. Yet the means to connect those goals to daily practice in the SFUSD have yet to be constructed, funded or implemented in a consistent sustainable manner.

Re-envisioning Curriculum Development

Re-envisioning an approach to traditional curriculum and its implementation is now a national and local priority. Educational strategists within the United States are moving toward curriculum design based on student-centered, reflective, collaborative,

constructivist approaches and content for students attending Grades K-12 (Longley, 1999; National Governor's Association, 2009; Warrick, 2001; Winick, 2008; Woodworth et al., 2011). The recent California Common Core Standards focus on the manner in which curriculum is taught and that priority will be shared with testing (California Department of Education, 2012). Common Core Standards stress the inclusion of demonstrated critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. An arts-integrated curriculum directly applies these criteria to curriculum design (Aprill, 2010).

Arts-integrated curriculum is not a new idea in education (Deasy, 2002; Dewey, 1902). Jacobs, Goldberg, and Bennett (1999) conducted research on a successful example of curriculum that integrated science units within elementary school classrooms. They observed that teaching through the arts provided students with hands-on experience involving scientific concepts that reinforced lessons learned through reading and discussion. In this example, fourth graders researched animal behavior and subsequently wrote and performed a play on nature. Students played the roles of various species of animals while others provided instrumental accompaniment. Jacobs et al. concluded that the arts gave students a deeper understanding of their science units and served as an effective and engaging teaching method.

Spence-Campbell (2008) conducted research that used the strategies of Heathcote for problem solving an arts-integrated social-studies project. The study was conducted with a sample of students who designed a city using drama as the medium of instruction. The primary research question asked was, "In what ways can the use of drama as a pedagogical tool encourage teachers to teach social studies?" (p. 14). Spence-Campbell used Heathcote's strategy of the "Mantle of the Expert" and Boal's (1992) theatre games

to address this question. Boal's theatre games, a series of theatrical systems for the expression and exploration of social change engage the voice, body, critical thought, and risk taking. The games have clear rules intended to enable followers to experience freedom and discovery within a trustworthy environment.

In the Spence-Campbell (2008) study, students researched and developed the topography, resources, jobs and characters of their fictitious city. Using drama, the students developed and researched job descriptions from the student-constructed city; life in the city was played out. Boal theatre games were played to explore the demands, conflicts, needs and resolutions of the city's people. The students made decisions, resolved dilemmas, and negotiated their resources. They experienced firsthand the ramifications of their choices played out with their classmates.

Reflecting on the process implemented by Spence-Campbell (2008) with the student participants from her study, the researcher generated themes for the participants to address. The themes were primarily formulated to inform the power and authority within society and the personal responsibilities of citizens. Spence-Campbell found that the use of drama as a pedagogical tool not only fulfilled learning goals, but exceeded the expected outcomes for social-studies learning at all elementary-school grade levels. The benefits of arts integration for students can include a deeper connection to academic curricular content; a deeper connection to fellow students, the classroom, and the school community; greater critical thinking skills applied to problem solving (Porteous, 2003); and increased student confidence (Claudio, 2002).

Claudio (2002) conducted a study using theatre as an educational tool to explore how children may be affected by drama. She used the Boal theatre games and exercises

to shift a classroom dynamic from a teacher-led monologue to an active dialogue with students. Through telling their story in photos, the students became the subject matter, the makers of knowledge, and the commentators on their own experience (Freire, 1974). Claudio focused on five themes during data analysis: (a) a sense of self, (b) a sense of others, (c) a sense of community, (d) a sense of communication, and (d) a sense of empowerment. She concluded that the Boal theatre games provided bilingual students with a holistic bridge between their classrooms and daily lives while making curriculum accessible. These are examples of re-envisioning curriculum through arts-led, student-centered, inclusive activities with goals predetermined by the classroom teacher, and at times, determined with the input of students.

Opportunities for the Arts Within the United States

Since the arts are not free to study in this country, millions of individuals are left without the financial means for exposure to the arts (Woronkowicz, 2007). Furthermore, currently the arts are not taught consistently in teacher training or in classrooms, which exacerbates the exclusion and eliminates millions more from this invaluable exposure (Hanna, Patterson, Rollins & Sherman, 2011). If students, teachers, and the general public, are not able to witness or learn about the arts, only those with discretionary income can experience the arts.

The United States does not have a ministry of art or culture serving as the one major funding and structuring body for the arts. The National Endowment of the Arts (NEA), an independent federal agency, is the designated arts organization of the U.S. government. It is funded by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees from the

Department of the Interior, and the Department of Environment and Related Agencies. Of the $146 million appropriated for 2012, 80 % went towards grantmaking, which was 14 % of the total revenue sources for not-for profit performing arts groups and museums in the U.S. The remaining revenue sources were comprised of 40% earned income, 20% individual donations and 26% additional from corporations, foundations and other federal and local agencies (Woronkowicz, 2007). Without government support to make the arts either free or affordable, only a small percentage of the population - the affluent - can experience the benefits of these powerful methods of expression, reflection and connection to ideas and communities.

Consequently, the U.S. choice to exclude millions of people from the arts has resulted in the arts being viewed as an elitist activity (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). If policy makers would decide to elevate the status and support for the arts, millions more Americans would have the choice to study, participate, or rally politically for or with the arts. That shift for the arts in America can begin in education (Hanna, Patterson, Rollins & Sherman, 2011; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

Adults - not children - are responsible for creating this divide, and adults allow this divide to persist. Within the arts, opera in particular is perceived to be at the top of the elitist art forms: yet children hold a far different view. For children, opera is high-stakes drama which they can grasp, and they are comfortable with the ideas and activities involved in making an opera (Wolf, 1999). Children apply and combine storytelling; movement, music, and singing with ease (Joy, 2002). If every student had access to arts education throughout their K-12 public education, arts education would reach every teacher and many more parents, greatly increasing the number of people experiencing

this invaluable mode of learning and enjoyment. With this knowledge and access, the arts would be shared, enjoyed, supported and participated in by millions more.

Summary

If education is understood to extend through the walls of the classroom to support and enhance the daily lives of students, policy makers must consider the known advantages of including student voice in education policies and practice. Both Dewey (1897, 1899) and Heathcote (1983) insisted on inclusion of student voice in working toward the ideal of an educated democratic society, a society within which individuals can build learning communities both inside and outside the classroom. Both Dewey (1902) and Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) practiced project based arts-integrated curriculum and held that the imagination was key to learning.

A wide range of research involving both qualitative and quantitative data exists to inform the academic and personal growth students can experience when engaged over time in visual arts, music, dance, and theatre (Catterall et al., 2012; Longley, 1999; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005). Study results have shown that participation in the arts has a positive impact on student learning, whether experienced as a unique discipline or as a strategy for an arts-integrated curriculum (Aprill, 2010; Campbell, 1997; Catterall et al., 1999). For students, opera as a method of instruction incorporates all the VAPA Standards of music, theater, visual arts and dance (Joy, 2002). For teachers, collaboration with an opera program can enhance the pedagogy and praxis required in progressive education to build problem solving approaches to events inside and out of the classroom (Wolf, 1999). According to Joy (2002)

> The writing of opera is a collaborative, multi disciplinary [*sic*] art, combining authorship and music composition. It encompasses a variety of academic

> disciplines and requires a high level of creative thinking and problem solving. The production of opera further includes choreography, artistic design and construction, lighting design, special effects, [and] logistical organization, in addition to musical and theatrical elements. (p. 222)

Opera is an active and accessible medium for inclusion of student voice, arts and learning, and integrated curriculum.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This purpose of this qualitative study was to expand arts education research that includes the experiences and perceptions of students working in collaboration with an arts organization in their classroom. The ARIA program supports teaching across curricula, employing opera as a medium of instruction. The school site has collaborated with the San Francisco Opera (SFO) Arts Resources In Action (ARIA) program since the ARIA program began in 2009. A focus group of 14 fifth-grade students attending the same class within a public elementary school were recruited as participants. The goal of the research was to incorporate multiple voices in reflecting on the experiences of the student participants working with the ARIA program in their classroom. The researcher had never taught at the school site, but worked with the SFO Education Department as a teaching artist since 2008 when the department was formed.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used to explore the research questions and examine students' perspective on the impact of working with the SFO ARIA program on their overall learning and academic success. This study collected data from surveys, observations and interviews with students, their classroom teacher and the teaching artists working with the class. The student surveys administered in interview sessions were generally reiterations of the questions but in written format.

The survey from the first interview asked five questions about their experiences making the opera. The survey was on one piece of paper and in four sections. Each section contained a familiar visual metaphor with space to write and provided a Likert-

type scale students could circle with the numbers 1-4. The number 4 signified that a student felt the class was doing their best, and the number 1 signified that the student felt the whole class could work harder. For example, one of the four questions was, “Do you have any ideas for helping the opera making process?” and the accompanying image was a light bulb. The other three questions asked how students assessed what they were doing as a group, how they were doing individually, and what challenges might arise for the group in making their opera.

Surveys in the second interview consisted of two rubrics using a Likert-type scale that asked students to assess and then circle their competence as a group member. Response options were: “exemplary,” “accomplished,” “developing” or “beginning.” The second Likert-type rubric was two pages and addressed the students’ understanding of their level of knowledge regarding specific California State Content Standards for history/social studies that the classroom teacher chose to cover in their opera making process. Response options for students to circle were: “a lot,” “some,” “a little” and “not so much.” The survey in the fourth interview asked students to name connections between disciplines while creating their opera.

Classroom observations were conducted weekly over the six month period of October 2011 to April 2012. During weekly opera sessions led by the classroom teacher, the teaching artists, or during collaboration between teachers, the researcher was at the back of the room taking notes involving student behavior and commentary, curriculum content and the ARIA program process. Opera sessions in class were generally scheduled for 50 minutes and were held twice a week. The researcher attended one of the two sessions each week. Being in the classroom for longer than the opera session allowed for

observations of students inside and out of the ARIA experience and notes on how the teachers transitioned into opera sessions.

Four interviews were conducted with the focus group of 14 student participants. The first was conducted with all 14 students in February 2011, lasting 50 minutes. The second session of interviews was conducted twice, each time with 7 students of the focus group and lasting 35 minutes. Each 7-member group was asked the same questions. The third session was conducted twice, each time with the complete group of 14 students lasting 15 minutes. The last session was shorter due to unforeseen changes in the class schedule. The fourth session included all 14 students, lasted 20 minutes and was conducted in April 2012. In addition there were two 20 minute interviews with the classroom teacher, one on March 6, 2012, and the other on April 23, 2012. Interviews with the lead teaching artist on April 11, 2012, and the composing teaching artist on April 5, 2012, lasted 30-minutes.

Creswell (2003) noted that a qualitative study is informed by interviews, observation, document review, and multimedia material. This qualitative study described the education process and the generative themes that emerged by analyzing interview data of the student and teacher participants, classroom observation, and student work. These multiple sources of data were synthesized to enrich understanding of the student perception of the SFO ARIA program within their classroom.

Site and Sample

The elementary school site was under the jurisdiction of the SFUSD. The school described itself as a school that supports: learning and achievement for our students with four core beliefs:

> (1) All students can learn and succeed, (2) Success breeds success, (3) Schools control the conditions of success within the school environment, and (4) Collaboration amongst all the stakeholders is essential. . . . We encourage joyful learners by providing hands-on activities such as field trips, music, gardening, sports and dance. We provide creative conditions and use teachable moments to support each child's individual strengths across multiple learning environments. We like to build students' skills in context, rather than in isolation, helping children to understand how their knowledge and skills are useful beyond the classroom. (West Portal Elementary School, 2011, para. 1)

The student demographics of this elementary school site were: 72% Asian, 13% other European American, 1% African American, 2.9% Latino, and 0.2% American Indian. Of the total student body, 40% of the students received free or reduced-price lunches and had attended since kindergarten. The average class size was 23 students, and 100% of the teachers were fully credentialed with an average of 16 years teaching experience (California Department of Education, 2012). The school also offered a Chinese Immersion Program with which the SFO ARIA program collaborated during the 2011-12 school year. When working with a class in the Chinese Immersion Program, the ARIA structure was adjusted through the constant translation required by the classroom teachers for opera time with the teaching artists.

The classroom observed was composed of 30 students (14 females and 16 males) but only 14 students volunteered to participate in the study. The focus group generally reflected the demographics of the classroom. The focus group also reflected the economic composition of the classroom, which was from predominantly middle-class families.

However, the classroom (as well as the focus group) did not represent the ethnic composition of the school. The classroom did not represent the ethnic composition of the school which was 68% Asian, 14% White, 9 % no response or multi, 3% Latino, 3% Filipino, 2% African American and less than 1% Pacific Islander and Native American. .

A letter requesting student participation and explaining the study was distributed to the students' parents prior to the classroom teacher asking students if they had interest in participating in the study. The letter adhered to the requirements of the Institutional Review Board. Before beginning classroom observations, the researcher visited the classroom to review the structure of the study in further detail and answer any questions the students had. Then students were given the option to remove themselves from the study by the classroom teacher after the researcher departed the class. All 14 students who volunteered chose to remain in the focus group.

Students and Teachers

The focus group of 14 fifth-grade student participants was composed of 6 males and 8 females, with a collective average experience of three years of opera-making with the ARIA program. The group was comprised of 43% Asian, 43% White, and 14% Latino, whereas the ethnic breakdown of the classroom was close to 60% Asian, 22%, White, and 6 % Latino. Two of the students were new to the school and were making opera for the first time. All 14 students were members of student government and involved in after-school sports or other arts groups.

Teacher participants included the classroom teacher and two ARIA teaching artists working with the class. The goal of interviewing the classroom teacher and the SFO ARIA teaching artists was threefold: 1) to contextualize the process for student-centered opera creation, 2) to hear from the teachers about how the teachers collaborated with students and each other to create student-centered work, and 3) to reveal the teachers' thoughts regarding how the ARIA program may impact overall student learning and academic success.

Data Collection

According to Creswell (2003), a qualitative study is conducted to explore a program, event, activity, or process with one or more individuals. Data collection in this qualitative study involved participant interviews, student surveys, and six months of weekly classroom observations. As the study was conducted in one school site and with one arts organization, historical documents pertaining to the school and the SFO ARIA program were reviewed (Courtney, 1997; Creswell, 2005; Roberts, 2004).

All interviews were held on the school premises, audio recorded and later transcribed. The structure of the open-ended questions was designed to prompt students in reflection through assessing, describing and discussing their experiences of collaborating with the ARIA program (Roberts, 2004). The following open-ended questions were posed in the first round of student interviews in the study:

1. What activities are you enjoying from the ARIA program? Why?
2. What activities are you not enjoying from the ARIA program? Why?
3. Tell me about working with the ARIA program this semester.
4. How is your class different since you began the ARIA program?
5. How do you think or talk about the ARIA program when you are not at school?

Students were given a one-page survey that asked them to rate their experience of creating an opera. During the first interview session, students raised and discussed the concept of education, learning, imagination and working as a group. To follow up on these, the researcher asked the following open-ended questions in the second round of student interviews in the study:

1. What is education?
2. What is learning?
3. How are they different or similar?
4. What are you getting at school?
5. What is imagination?
6. Is education going to help you in life?
7. How will education help you in life?

Following the second interview students filled out two surveys. The first was a one page Likert-type scale on which students circled definitions that depicted their role of working in a group. The second was a one page survey regarding how students assessed how the class was doing as a group in creating their opera.

During the second interviews students discussed the themes of applied learning in life and the work force. Next, the following two open-ended questions were presented in the third interviews in the study: 1) Are there ways in which the opera program connects to your education or learning? and, 2) What could the ARIA program do to make it better for students? After the second interviews, students circled responses on a one-page Likert-type scale that described their level of competence with writing, creating their story, opera vocabulary, and how they were combining those activities while making their opera.

During the third interviews, students discussed curriculum connections focusing on story telling, and how and what they felt their history research needed to include. Students also made connections to acting, singing, creativity, and having the chance to teach others about opera and history by performing theirs. Students also offered

suggestions for adjusting the program. From the themes of the third interviews came the fourth and final round of interview questions.

During the fourth interviews session, the students were given written questions prior to the interview that addressed any connections students experienced around four categories. The categories were organized as drama and language arts, visual arts and science, music and mathematics, and movement and history. The interview session was spent discussing the written questions. The interview concluded with the reiteration of the question: What could the program do differently that could make it better for students?

Data Analysis

The analysis procedures for this qualitative study adhered to qualitative research procedures for coding and developing themes and categories (Creswell, 2005). Charmaz (2006) described coding as the noting of key points mentioned by participants during data collection. Data drawn from the focus group of 14 student participants was constantly compared with student work and the SFO ARIA program curriculum applied within their classroom (Courtney, 1997).

The first step was the notation called "open coding." Open coding entailed noting the views of participants from the first round of interviews to the open-ended questions. The transcripts for each of the four rounds of interviews with the focus group of 14 students was read once without note taking in an attempt to glean a sense of the intention of each participant. All rounds of interviews began with open-ended questions, and each round produced data enabling the development of categories and themes that guided development of the open-ended interview questions for the second, third, and fourth

rounds of interviews. Following the first set of interviews, the next step of coding implemented was known as axial coding.

Axial coding facilitated an understanding of each participants point of view by grouping the codes into concepts revealed by the participants. On the second read of transcripts, a highlighter was used to mark phrases, topics, and themes that repeatedly emerged. Notes were taken and areas of the text were flagged to identify the location of various ideas significant to clarifying the points of view of participants. That pattern was repeated after each round of interviews. After the total of four interview rounds were completed with the 14 students, the study reached saturation, or the point where the data were fully representative of the perceptions of the focus group. When interviews and their analyses reached saturation, the data analysis phase was completed. Additional data included a description of each participant and documents distilling the SFO ARIA program and the school site.

This qualitative case study incorporated Robert's (2004) definition of validity as "the degree to which your instrument truly measures what it purports to measure" (p. 136). Toward that end, student observations were conducted on campus using classroom-management structures that were routine for the students. The goal was to avoid artificial responses that would occur within a controlled setting or laboratory. Observing participants on campus was a strategy of data collection with the least impact on the focus group.

The classroom teacher and the ARIA teaching artists performed member checking of their respective interview transcripts (Creswell, 2003). Member checking refers to the process that allowed teachers an opportunity to offer any comments or corrections

regarding their intended viewpoints during their interviews. In addition a third party arts educator not employed by the SF Opera Education Department or the school site was hired to read all the transcripts in order to further triangulate the analysis of data. As the researcher is a part time employee of the SFO Education Department, this step was taken to address a dynamic that can be present in qualitative research when Creswell (2003) stated, “Qualitative studies in general have a level of researcher interpretation and subjectivity to their process” (p. 182). This is not a required step in qualitative research, but serves to address the circumstance of the researcher as a part time employee with the SFO Education Department.

Table 1

Data Collection and Analysis Timetable for the 2011-12 School Year

Year, Month	Class work	Data sources
2011		
November	Class observation	Weekly observation Researcher reflection journal
December	First interviews	Interview transcripts a
December	Class observation	Weekly observation Researcher reflection journal
2012		
January	None	Open coding following first session
January	Class observation	Weekly observation Researcher reflection journal
January	Second interviews	Interview transcripts and surveys
February	None	Axial coding for second-interview sessions
February	Class observation	Weekly observation Researcher reflection journal
February	Third interviews	Interview transcripts and surveys
February	None	Axial coding for third-interview sessions
March	Class observation	Weekly observation Researcher reflection journal
April	Class observation	Weekly observation Researcher reflection journal
May	Fourth interviews	Interview transcripts and surveys
May	Student performance of opera	Photos and video
May	None	Coding paradigm
May–July	None	Completed data analysis

Limitations and Protection of Participants

A limitation of this study was the small sample size of 14 student participants and three teaching participants. According to Creswell (2005), this number is small but legitimate for ethnographic qualitative research to attain the "saturation" point required for the study (p. 244). Additionally, Cone and Foster (2006) reminded researchers to make explicit any relationships between themselves and their subjects. I, as the researcher, did not know any students being observed. I did have a relationship with SFO Education Department as a part-time employee and knew the classroom teacher and the teaching artists from professional development sessions, but had not worked previously with any of them in a classroom or at the school site. I worked autonomously to conduct research on the SFO ARIA program and made that relationship transparent to both the students and the teachers involved in the study. While first meeting with students, I stated I was interviewing them to better understand the ARIA program from their point of view and said their honest opinions could help improve the program.

Lastly, as a European American, middle class, middle-aged woman who was aware of how assumptions about people can impact an individuals response, I framed my questions and responses explicitly to highlight the idea that individuals are unique and do things differently. To mitigate for any assumptions about the goals of the study, age, or ethnicity phrases applied included: "well at my house we…., what happens at your house?" "There are so many ways to do that, how do you do ……?" "I don't know about that, what is that like…..?" Or, "I have heard of that, can you tell me more?" The intention of inclusive investigation was to minimize potential issues around trust and authority for students. Although older "White" people in positions of authority are

familiar at this school, the researcher was new to the classroom. Given the duration of the study, students had opportunities to question and observe the researcher which built relationships during observations and interviews.

In accordance with the University of San Francisco rules for the protection of participants, as stated by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, consent from the parents of the student focus group in this qualitative study was obtained in November 2011. Signed consent was also received to interview the classroom teacher and the teaching artists in October 2011. Approval to conduct the study was granted by the SFUSD school site in September 2011.

Background of Researcher

I, the researcher of this study, was born in New York City and attended private schools until fourth grade. At the age of nine, my family moved to San Francisco, California, where I attended public schools through the end of high school. Some of the California schools were rich in resources, with engaging teachers and curriculum; others offered minimal opportunities for active learning or engagement with the curriculum. I had my first experience of a physically dangerous school environment while in the fifth grade. I witnessed student beatings in the restrooms, and a fellow student jammed a sewing needle into my finger with the teacher standing less than 3 feet away. Few eager learners or teachers existed in this school; candy was the reward for completed assignments. These new experiences changed my sense of connection to school and lowered my expectations in terms of growing with a community of learners. I kept in the back of my mind the question: Why doesn’t everybody like school? From school experiences in the U.S. and abroad, through earning a BA, an MFA in theatre (in the

U.K), and 20 years of teaching and directing theater, the question of what makes learning engaging has remained on my mind.

As I continue to teach grades K-16 and facilitate teacher trainings, this question has only become more pressing. I witness many students not engaged in their schooling and teachers who work desperately to inspire students to want to learn. Whether or not students have good grades, the haunting question remains: Why can't school be enjoyable? I am looking for all stakeholders to have a voice in revisiting and developing teacher-led, student-driven, integrated curriculum to make school a place for teachers, students, staff and parents, a place they want to be. I believe student voice is a pivotal variable to enhance the best practice of educators.

The potential bias that I have been a part-time employee of the SF Opera Education Department since 2008 could also have served as an advantage as I could recognize department practice, planning and curriculum. My researcher advantage came from 20 years of teaching and knowledge of the California State Standards for K-12 public schools in identifying the goals of classroom activities. I practice multicultural pedagogy and working for the SFO Education Department has only reinforced my belief that well-designed and systematically implemented, project-based learning can engage students across cultures and the curriculum.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to expand arts education research by including the perceptions of students working with an arts organization in their classroom. This chapter presents the responses to the study's research questions: "1) How do the fifth grade students of the school site assess the impact of participating in the San Francisco Opera's SFO ARIA program on their overall learning and academic success? 2) How do teachers assess the impact of the students' experiences with the SFO ARIA program? and 3) How do the students and teachers believe the SFO ARIA program might be altered to enrich its impact for students?" The participants made up a focus group of 14 fifth grade public school students, their classroom teacher, and two SFO ARIA teaching artists who worked with the students to create their opera.

The study collected participant responses through open-ended interviews and surveys. This data generated four themes on how working with the opera impacted the students' overall academic success. The four generative themes were: (a) Learning - that which students can apply to school, work and life, (b) Education - that which relates to standards directly within the curriculum, (c) Imagination - that which is creative expression, and (d) Applying learning outside the classroom. These selected generative themes were triangulated through teacher interviews, classroom observations and a third party educator not employed by the SF Opera Education Department or the school site. Themes were then confirmed by students and the classroom teachers.

Participants

The focus group included students who were speaking English as a first language, students whose parents were the first generation to live in the U.S., and those whose families had been in the U.S. for multiple generations. Some had parents who went to college; some had blue-collar jobs and others white-collar jobs. Some had parents with partners, while others were single parents. Shared among these students was their enjoyment of the opera and sense of connection to their school. Data collected from the first student survey are included in the description of the student participants.

The three teacher participants were the students' classroom teacher, who had taught fifth grade for four years, and two teaching artists from the SF Opera Education Department who worked with this classroom over the course of this study. Both teaching artists had worked at the school site and with this classroom teacher prior to this study. All three teachers were White.

To protect their identity, participants' real names were not used. The students were given names from characters in operas. The teachers received names of people who previously worked with the San Francisco Opera Company.

Student Participants

Ariane

Ariane, a European American girl, was working with the ARIA program for her fourth year. She said she loved writing, creating a story, making it a full production and that she was accomplished regarding the opera vocabulary. Ariane wrote she did "90% of her best, so she thought she could change to help." She noted her classmates were not giving their all because they did not take it as seriously as others in the class. She

reported there should be more games to play in class but that her experience was good overall. She thought the class should focus on their staging and singing.

Ariane was interested in talking about the world, literature and living. She mentioned books she read to convey her point of view and asked if I was familiar with them. Ariane also stated she had very deep concerns that there was little place for her imagination at school. She referred to the educational system at large and said "teachers should trust kids know stuff more." Ariane was an avid writer. By the end of the whole process she claimed she had great experience.

Bao Zheng

Bao Zheng, a Chinese boy, was working with the ARIA program for his fourth year. He stated he was accomplished in all categories of creating their opera. He said he "is okay with acting weird things," and that he gave it his best. He noted his classmates were very good at acting on the stage. He reported education was an obstacle in creating the opera, and that it was a limitation for creativity to stay so close to the curriculum. He used a minimum of opera and staging terms in the classroom. Bao Zheng was popular among his classmates and had his own ideas, but was not aggressive about sharing them. He enjoyed watching class activities as well as participating.

Daphne

Daphne, a European American girl, was working with the ARIA program for her fourth year. She said her favorite part of creating opera was the vocabulary and that she liked creating the story and figuring out ways to bring it to life. She noted she was getting comfortable with writing, doing well and giving opera her best. She stated she liked it when everybody worked together. She wrote that the rest of the class made a good effort

and that overall, she had a positive experience. Daphne helped in the office at school, was quick to smile and laugh, and stated that she really liked school, her friends and art. She spoke her mind in interviews and classroom observations. She mentioned being concerned about social issues and named fairness, being green and social justice as her main concerns. The school was clearly a community she felt she belonged to.

Don Jose

Don Jose, a first generation Latino boy, was working with the ARIA program for his third year. Don Jose said he was good at all aspects of making the opera, that opera was fun and he was “okay” at it. He noted his overall experience was very positive and that he consistently worked towards the group’s goals and found a role within the group. He stated he may not encourage others, but that he did show sensitivity to the feelings of others. Classroom observations showed Don Jose was easily distracted and enjoyed being a trickster with fellow students. Don Jose mentioned he wanted to become a baseball player with the San Francisco Giants, a wrestler or maybe a builder (that could mean mechanical engineer or work on cars), he was not sure. He enjoyed using pop culture references when speaking about his goals and heroes like Michael Jackson and Justin Bieber.

Frasquita

Frasquita, a Latina girl, had her first year at the school site and her first year working with the ARIA program. She reported she really loved opera and that her family sang opera and other genres of music often. In an interview session she told us that one day when she was talking with her aunt she told her, “one day I want to be in an opera.” She stated she thought she could bring ideas to the opera and said she enjoyed the whole

process, “every step.” Frasquita was engaged in the subject matter; she raised her hand consistently and offered concrete suggestions. She listened to other student ideas and was willing to incorporate them into her own. Like Rudolpho, Frasquita had a large vocabulary for a fifth grader. Class observations noted that both demonstrated the use of an advanced vocabulary in recounting their class story as they developed it in class and in their suggestions for staging the opera. She noted she was a singer. In rehearsals her commitment to performing was complete, she knew her parts, and was consistently ready and willing to work. Frasquita was very comfortable being with people, speaking to and with people, and working as a team player.

Hoffman

Hoffman, a European American boy, had his first year at the school site and his first year working with the ARIA program. He stated he loved the opera making process and that his class did a lot of research on their opera. He noted he did his best, but he could have worked harder on paying attention. Hoffman and another student, Xu Xian, were inseparable in class and talked a lot. Classroom observations noted Hoffman had a difficult time being still. Hoffman was very aware of his surroundings and other people, he took time to think about a question and chose his words carefully when answering. He had a large vocabulary for a fifth grader.

Manon

Manon, a European American girl, was working with the ARIA program for her third year. She reported that she loved creating a story, figuring out all the details, and that she was accomplished at writing and using vocabulary. She stated she had a very positive experience and was doing her best, and that her classmates were making a good

effort. Manon mentioned she liked people who gave ideas and enjoyed working on the design of the costumes. She often offered viable solutions to the creative questions put to the class. She also corrected and talked over students in class often. Manon used opera and staging terms in class. Manon was the most well-rounded performer on the day of their performance; she sung out with volume, clarity and was committed to her character as demonstrated with her acting. She knew her actions and everyone else's. Her performance stood out on the day operas were presented.

Micaela

Micaela, a European American, was working with the ARIA program for her fourth year. She reported she loved creating the story, she liked writing and making up stage actions. She stated said she was getting comfortable learning new vocabulary and she used opera and staging terms in class. She noted she really enjoyed designing costumes. Micaela was easy to smile and laugh, and mentioned that she really liked to write and read different kinds of books. She discussed that she took opportunities for learning at school seriously. She remarked that a student's imagination is not an assumed part of education and this bothered her deeply.

Rudolpho

Rudolpho, a European American boy, was working with the ARIA program for his fourth year. He said he loved creating the story and "everything" about creating an opera. He really liked the writing and the details of constructing stage actions and said he was good at writing. Class observations confirmed Rudolpho had a large vocabulary for a fifth grader. He reported he made a good effort, but the class was doing their best. He stated he had lots of ideas, but wanted other students to contribute as well. Class

observations recorded his constant daily suggestions and solutions, as he actively sought out others to contribute to the conversation as well. Rudolpho was very invested in maintaining peace in his class and attempted to mend small temporary riffs between his fellow students with statements such as, "What he meant was... or... well, you just do it like....." and other negotiating tactics.

Ting Yi

Ting Yi, a first generation Chinese girl, was working with the ARIA program for her third year. She did not indicate on her survey that she loved making the opera; she noted she was accomplished at writing, and the activities involved in the details of the production. Ting Yi judged her effort with harsher standards than those she applied to her fellow students. She reported she was getting comfortable with creating the story and opera vocabulary, and that even though she made a good effort; she could “work even harder.” She noted “everyone was good at acting even if you thought you are not, everyone got a chance.” She stated her classmates were doing their best and that her overall experience was very positive. She commented that their opera should be a combination of education and imaginary things. She also reported that she thought the students would be ready by performance time.

Ting Yi spoke about education as the path that was going to prepare her to succeed professionally. Due to this understanding, she was willing to try things that made her uncomfortable. She did not like rushing in answering surveys, as she wanted to answer each question thoughtfully. She stated more than once that she was convinced there was room within her education for the use of her imagination without missing out on the content.

Truong Vien

Truong Vien, a first generation Vietnamese boy, was working with the ARIA program for his second year. He was the oldest, one of the smallest in class, and had been held back a year. He said he felt accomplished in all the elements of writing, creating the story, vocabulary and putting the production together. He noted he did his best and the class had really good ideas and writing. He offered some ideas in class. He stated an obstacle was "getting stuck in ideas and information." He wrote patience was what the class needed to focus on and that he had a great experience.

Xue Xiang-Lin

Xue Xiang-Lin, a Chinese girl, was working with the ARIA program for her third year. She used the opera staging terms in class. She stated she was accomplished about the staging of the story, and was developing her comfort with the writing and creating of the story. She noted she really enjoyed making an opera. Xue Xiang-Lin was verbally in control and in the thick of social activity. She asked questions unapologetically, and she had opinions about it all. Students were drawn to her. Xue Xiang-Lin had thoughtful, observed and articulate commentary, and a razor sharp wit.

Xu Xian

Xu Xian, a first generation Chinese boy, was working with the ARIA program for his third year. He said he loved the whole process and opera was okay, but not "super exciting." He reported the class was "very into it and really loved opera." Xu Xian stated he was accomplished in employing opera vocabulary and he did use opera and staging terms in class conversations. Classroom observations noted Xu Xian was one of the class clowns who had difficulty not talking all the time. Xu Xian was a social ham who knew

he was funny as his classmates egged him on. His suggestions for the production ranged from logical to blatantly unfeasible. He was quick to smile and laugh.

Zhen Luo

Zhen Lou, a Chinese girl, was working with the ARIA program for her second year. She said she loved making a full production and felt accomplished in creating the story and with the opera vocabulary. Zhen Lou stated she liked all the theater games the class played and was glad they got to make an opera. She noted she made a good effort and that other students did the same. Zhen Lou did not offer many suggestions in class. She did not lead the focus group verbally or in her written responses. She did comment that the students got loud sometimes and that she did not like the costuming option of wearing other people's clothes. She was always polite and attentive in interviews.

Teacher Participants

Flicka, the classroom teacher

Flicka had a B.A. in Graphic Design and earned her teaching credentials at San Francisco State University. She taught third grade for one year, and did one year of student-teaching for fourth grade. Before that she taught art almost every summer. Flicka had been an art major in college for a couple of years and then switched to graphic design. She never studied arts education. Flicka stated opera offered the students a unique experience. Her reasons included the level of student driven decisions in all elements of their opera and the involvement with the opera process over the entire school year made it something students invested their time and ideas into and delivered a product the students called their own (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012).

Sheri, the SFO lead teaching artist

Sheri started with the SFO Education Department as a lead teaching artist during its inception in 2008. She had a B.A. from the University of California at Santa Barbara in Literature and Creative Studies. Her first job was one-on-one tutoring mostly in math during high school. In college she worked as a writing tutor. She had two education jobs, one as a teaching assistant in a kindergarten Spanish immersion class in a public school in San Francisco, and the second running an after-school tutoring center at a private school in San Francisco. Sheri was also a published, performed and award winning playwright.

In 2011 Sheri founded an opera company for Grades 1-5 in an after school program that met twice a week creating their own opera. At the end of the school year, her opera company presented a public demonstration about their process and performed their opera. The researcher asked the lead teaching artist for her definition of arts education. She replied arts education was, “not only exposure to the unusual, but a process for student collaboration, students listening to other people’s ideas and students thinking critically about their own ideas” (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012). Sheri contended the year-long program was especially helpful to those students who were hesitant to join in quickly. She enjoyed that this class sat for the forty–five minute sessions and could complete minute work. She thought, some might find that boring, but in her opinion the students were “absolutely invested” (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012). Students actively participated in all the details of creating their opera. Sheri was asked to speak at the 2012 fifth-grade graduation ceremony at the school site. She worked

with 11 classes at the school during the 2011-12 school year (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012).

Jake, the SFO composing teaching artist

Jake started as a composing teaching artist with the SFO Education Department in 2010. He had a D.M.A in Composition from Rice University and a M.M. from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He had his first exposure to live music at church. In high school he accompanied the choral program and sang in the chorus. After leaving Rice University Jake moved to New York City to pursue an acting career and has toured in the U.S and Europe as a performer. While in NYC he worked as an opera-composing teaching artist with Ela-Picolo-Teatro-Del Opera in Brooklyn. At the time of the study he was teaching musicianship and theory, and music history and literature at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Jake was also an accompanist for the S.F. Ballet and the Music Director and organist for St. John's Episcopal Church. Jake's libretto and music for the *Search for Espinoza* premiered at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 2010. Flicka and Sheri worked together through the ARIA program since 2009. Jake joined the ARIA program and these two teachers at the school site in 2010. Jake was the composing teaching artist that worked with Sheri during the 2011-12 school year (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012).

Process

Opera Overview

As of 2011-12, the time of the study, the SFO Education Department ARIA program happened in three classroom formats. The options were either a semester with 14 visits from a lead teaching artist and 5 visits from a composing teaching artist, a

yearlong program with 28 visits from a lead teaching artist and 7 visits from a composing teaching artist, or a 3rd or 4th year classroom teacher leading the program for a year and receiving 14 visits from a lead teaching artist and 7 visits from a composing teaching artist. The goal of the ARIA program was for students to drive a highly sequenced and creative process enveloped in curriculum chosen by the classroom teacher. The ARIA program was available for Grades K-12. This study observed a fourth-year classroom teacher working with a lead teaching artist who visited twice in fall 2011, 12 times in the spring 2012 semester.

The classroom teacher and the teaching artist met weekly to hone lesson plans, troubleshoot problems and chart progress. The ARIA program required collaborative teaching and planning between the classroom teacher and teaching artists. The curriculum was then implemented with the support and co-teaching of the classroom teacher and an ARIA teaching artist. Classroom teachers planned additional opera class sessions throughout the week as appropriate. As students cultivated their integrated curriculum and created their own opera, they also investigated the elements and history of opera.
A composing teaching artist visited the class 7 times over the spring 2012 semester. The lead teaching artist also served as coordinator for the ARIA programs resources for all classroom formats.

Flicka chose six ARIA resources for her class of 2011-12. In September 2011, she used the one hour SFO Education Department DVD of the opera *The Magic Flute,* an English version with English subtitles. In November 2011, the class attended the opera *Carmen* for its final dress rehearsal at the War Memorial Opera House. Ten of the 14 members of the focus group attended the opera. Next in November 2011, opera singers

from the Adler program visited their classroom. Also in November, 2011, the SFO costume shop supervisor visited their classroom; the entire class was present for both events. In February 2012, the whole class visited the SFO scene shop. The final resource chosen occurred in March 2012, when the class had two visits from the production artists of the SFO scene shop to their school (Fieldnotes, March 20, 2012).

These interactive experiences gave students access to professionals who relayed their personal stories while discussing their jobs, discipline, dedication, and love of opera. These opportunities provided insight into the career choices of musician, singer, songwriter, performer, conductor, designer, builder, welder, stagehand, stage manager and many more. The focus group reported they really enjoyed meeting people from the SFO, getting to go to the opera and going to the scene shop. The chronology of the school year is a summation of fieldnotes taken over the six months of weekly observations of Flicka's classroom.

Chronology of the School Year

September and October 2011

In the fall of 2011, Flicka informed Sheri what sections of the California Department of Education History/Social Studies curriculum she wanted to incorporate into her students' opera. Sheri then created lesson plans in concert with Flicka's history and social studies curriculum goals and the ARIA curriculum content. English Language Arts (ELA) Standards and the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Standards are inextricably integrated into lesson plans in opera creation and are therefore included.

Flicka then conducted weekly opera classes to research the American Revolution in 50 minutes sessions. In one of their sessions, the class watched the SFO Education

Departments one-hour version of the opera, *The Magic Flute* a story used to introduce the structure of opera. Students then wrote about and discussed story structure, character development and learned basic opera vocabulary based on watching *The Magic Flute*. The class wrote and did acting exercises about character construction.

To decide on the literary structure of their opera, the students defined, reviewed and then brainstormed about interesting genres that would serve them in telling the story of the American Revolution (Fieldnotes, October, 20, 2011). The class chose to create the story in the chronological order of events. Students enjoyed creating real and imagined events and characters to add action and twists to their story through improvisational theater games, writing and drawing (Fieldnotes, November, 10, 2012). The classroom teacher narrowed the writing with students to retain the outline on which they had agreed. The students had wanted to add characters from outside the time period, and possibly this galaxy, to weave into telling their story but were vetoed by the classroom teacher.

One writing exercise the students used in creating their opera was their morning free writing time. The first 20 minutes of each school day was free writing time for all grade appropriate classes at the school site. Students wrote on a very broad range of topics each week and were invited to stand and share what they had written with the class. This resulted in numerous scripts, dreams, ideas for the opera, great adventures and nonsensical ramblings (Fieldnotes, November, 17, 2012).

In researching the American Revolution, students found pictures of locations, people, hobbies, jobs, and clothing in order to understand the realities of the time. Students then drew pictures about these topics with the aim of historical accuracy. The students read novels, and articles, and letters found between John Adams and Abigail

Adams that surprised the students and Flicka about Abigail Adams desire that women should have the right to vote (Fieldnotes, October 27, 2011). The students also used the Declaration of Independence and their history textbook to further understand the events of the Boston Tea Party and the political climate of the time. Individually, students wrote possible events for their opera.

The next phase of writing the opera happened predominately in small groups during opera time and ideas were shared with the whole class. During the story construction process, Flicka intermittently passed the ideas of one group to the next before sharing with the whole class for editing. She noted her intention was for students to focus on the whole story and to try to avoid being tied to their own ideas. Flicka stated that students might be more objective in their editing suggestions if they did not know the author of the piece. Ideas were voted on by the whole class, and some were dismissed as they did not fit within the story, and others because they did not help the story move forward clearly. The whole class then contributed in listing out the events and the characters they wanted to include in their story. Sheri made two visits to the classroom in the fall to discuss the elements and structure of opera making.

Games commonly began and/or ended opera sessions. Games played in class were introduced by both Flicka and Sheri. The goals of games included relaxing, focusing, or honing skills such as physical and vocal skills, teambuilding, listening, negotiating, observation and stagecraft. Relaxing as a class helped students to hone slowing down together, and not to keep rushing around or making noise. Focusing as a class helped students to improve staying on topic. Physical and vocal skills pushed students to warm up, stretching their bodies to see what they could do, and to strengthen their speaking and

singing voices. Games involving teambuilding, listening, and negotiating prompted students to polish working together without the pressure of results. The games of observation and stagecraft encouraged students to sharpen observation skills and ability to replicate movement without fear of reprisal or judgment in front of their peers.

Unanimously, the favorite game played by this class of students was *Sausage*. The rules of the game were that one person sit on a chair or a stool at the front of the class where the person can be seen by all the participants. Any member of the class can raise a hand and ask a question of the seated person. The seated person answers using just one word, sausage. The goal was to make the seated person lose focus and laugh. The student who breaks the focus of the seated person gets to sit and answer questions next. I was invited to play one day and was surprised at how hard it was to keep a straight face with 30 students heckling you with questions.

In the Manner was the second favorite game of this class. The rules were that one person left the room, and then students would call out adverbs as one person lists them on the board. The students voted on which of the adverbs would inform their behavior. The student outside the room then returned and asked the class to perform an action, for example to sit, or take out a piece of paper, or stand. The students performed this task in the manner of the chosen adverb and the student, who had been out of the room, guessed which adverb they were employing. Flicka and Sheri appreciated the language arts application of grammar and building vocabulary in this game.

Another game enjoyed by this class was *The Wax Museum*. The rules were that the person at the front of the class had their back to the class. While the person was turned towards the board the students slowly made their way towards to board. The

moment the person at the front of the class whipped around and looked at the students, everyone froze. The person at the front of the room looked for students who were not frozen as if they were in a wax museum and disqualified students in motion. Games ending a session were sometimes used as a reward for completing a section of editing or staging. Games were played throughout the school year (Fieldnotes, October 27, 2011).

November 2011

The class was visited by Adler Fellows, two opera singers and one pianist who either had or would work on the main stage of the San Francisco opera house and other great domestic and international opera houses. These singers auditioned in all corners of the globe to be picked for this world renowned program. The pianists help prepare the singers as singing coaches and accompanists. Students prepared for their Adler visit by brainstorming questions to ask the Adler Fellows and by watching an SFO Education Department short DVD of Adler Fellow interviews. The Adler Fellows took questions after their demonstration of two arias and a duet. The Adler Fellow pianist facilitated interactive singing exercises with the students.

The students were also visited by a member of the SFO costume shop. The goal was to prepare students for thinking about and understanding the design of costumes. Prior to the arrival of the costume shop supervisor students began designs for their show and prepared questions to ask. With Flicka moving around the classroom asking questions, students worked in small groups exploring costume needs. Classroom observations contained examples of groups drawings that were historically accurate for John Adams and other characters, another group focused on who Abigail Adams friends might be and wear, and another group focused on the military dress and weapons of the

day. Students had the option to present their designs to the whole class. Hoffman, Rudolpho, Norma, and Lucrezia chose to present and explain their drawings to the class.

The costume shop supervisor and the students discussed design from historical, practical and financial angles. From the historical aspect of design, they discussed a list of possible research tools that included (a) picture books; (b) nonfiction and fictional books; (c) movies; (d) paintings; (e) myths; (f) magazines (g) the Web. Then the group discussed the practical questions costume design teams' needed answered to create a garment. Understanding the actions of a character is a practical question posed for each garment. Included in that discussion was what the audience should understand about a character based on their costume at any given moment of the opera. Knowing the students attended the opera *Carmen,* the costume shop supervisor brought the jacket worn by the character Escamillo in the final scene. The jacket was very opulent, demonstrating to the audience the characters high status as a top bullfighter. Written into the opera, Escamillo and Carmen have a long and physical fight, at which point he stabs her to death. The jacket must be able to withstand every blow of their fight while allowing him to sing and maintain its visual glory. This production's jacket cost four thousand dollars to build and weighed 10 pounds. The next part of the discussion was garment construction and with the students the costume shop supervisor brainstormed simple practical questions in garment construction such as:

- What are the performer's measurements?
- How many performers will be wearing this garment? And are they close in size?
- Does this character get covered in blood or does the garment get ripped?

- Does the character have a fast costume change during the show? And do we have the staff (or budget to afford to hire someone) to help the performer change clothes?
- If this character is wearing a wig, do they put in on before or after their costume piece?

This discussion expanded and led the class to develop a second list of questions that would apply to all design teams in opera:

- What is the opera's whole budget?
- Are the designs complete?
- How do we get that look for the least amount of money?
- Do we have the skills to produce that item ourselves or do we have to hire somebody with that expertise?
- Do we own it already? If not, do we own something similar we can alter? If not, can we find the right materials? If so, Can we get them sent to the shop in time?
- How many hours of our teams time is this going to take? And do we have the appropriate number of people to build this in time keeping in mind our other commitments?
- Is the size of the set informing how big or small a costume can be?
- How do we make this look believable from the first last row of the opera house, and close ups in High Definition film?

The costume supervisor left the class after spending an hour with the students as the lunch bell rang. The students groaned collectively and stated they were not ready for her to leave. Xu Xian commented about "not realizing how many people it took," (Interview

with Xu Xian, February 14, 2012) and Ariane added "how much there was to think about" (Interview view with Ariane, February 14, 2012) and Xue Xiang-Lin stated "it sounded like fun." (Interview with Xue Xiang-Lin, February 14, 2012).

Text for the opera continued to be developed through a number of research, writing, acting and editing exercises. Following their in-depth research, students then started to choose words, phrases, or statements they wanted included in their opera. One method employed for scene and text development was to have the students recreate scenes they were familiar with i.e., going to the ice cream store. When students were able to include ideas about working with an audience in mind, they moved to staging scenes that could be in the opera, and then to scenes they had written for the opera. Sometimes the location, relationships and emotions of the characters were decided on prior to creating scenes, sometimes it was all improvised. Text in opera can be spoken or sung; this class decided to keep all their words within their songs (Fieldnotes, November 17, 2011).

December 2011

During December, Flicka's goal was to establish and complete the outlined events of three acts, with an understanding of where one song would be placed in each act. She and the students worked weekly to accomplish this goal. The students edited and narrowed the body of material they had developed.

A point of debate between the students was the question: If the class decided to keep the final scene as a representation of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, would the characters playing women get to sign it too? One side of the debate was that it would not be historically accurate if the girls signed it (majority of males held this

opinion), and the opposite view was that girls signing the Declaration of Independence would be a new twist the class put on the story (majority females held this opinion). Having read letters between John and Abigail Adams, the girls of the class and Rudolpho argued that the right for women to vote was already being talked about at the time, and therefore had merit to be included. A class conversation started off the debate and a class conversation ended it. It was decided by the students fairly quickly that the girls would sign too if they kept that as the final scene (Fieldnotes, December 8, 2011).

January and February 2012

When the Spring 2012 semester began, Sheri came into the classroom almost every other week for 50-minute sessions. As she began her work with the class, they focused on editing lyrics. The structure of verses and chorus, alliteration, rhyming, syllabication and repetition were included in class discussions for lyric creation. Sheri began guiding students' discussion and activities for staging the opera and then started to stage the events of the scenes with students. Staging and lyrics were completed between January and April (Fieldnotes, January 12, 2012).

With the lyrics focused, yet not complete, Jake began his visits guiding the music writing. Students continued brainstorming lyrics with Jake as a method for lyric completion. One of Jake's vocal warm-ups had students stand with their hands extended out in front of them pretending they had a balloon between their arms. As students inhaled, they expanded the imaginary balloon in front of them, and then diminished the size of the balloon as they exhaled. He employed this technique for bringing students attention to their breath in each of his sessions. The increased volume created by students was audible and gave students a concrete gesture to focus on to reconnect with their

breath. This was one of a dozen exercises he tried with the students. He found three or four that worked for this group and repeated them (Fieldnotes, February 9, 2012).

Editing of lyrics happened during writing sessions, singing rehearsals and staging rehearsals. Jake accomplished song writing quickly with clear musical structure and language and a thorough understanding of how to compose with a group. Jake played major and minor scales on the classroom piano as an approach that offered the students reference points to discuss what they wanted from their music. The class talked about how each scale made them feel, or what they imagined would be happening on stage. Jake also played with tempo and volume demonstrating for the students the tools at their disposal and the vocabulary to request particular musical qualities. Classroom observations noted each song required a portion of three to five opera sessions to complete, as finding the right lyrics took time. Jake had seven visits with this class, as prescribed for a full school year timeline (Fieldnotes, February 19, 2012).

March 2012

The whole class visited the SF opera scene shop. To prepare for the tour, students developed questions they could ask about the scene shop and what goes into building an opera. Students were provided with safety guidelines and were asked to look and listen for design solutions for their opera during their visit. While at the scene shop students were given a project that took 10-15 minutes to complete. The project required students to practice techniques used by the crafts people and may have proven helpful in finding solutions to their design questions. Student projects, however, did not involve welding torches or any machinery. Instead, students used scissors, pens, glue, paint and

paintbrushes to complete projects. A question and answer session followed the tour and project work.

The next ARIA resource the classroom teacher chose included two visits from the production artists of the scene shop to their class. The purpose of the first production artist meeting was to finalize the student design list of what was necessary and what materials would be built or found. The production artist guided the student driven discussion to simplify student ideas into practical, timely, design solutions. A crew of four production artists assisted the students as well as two classroom teachers and one parent volunteer.

At the second meeting the production artists provided technical expertise and guidance as students began to build their sets, props and costumes. The production artists brought the majority of building materials. One of the production artists demonstrated the weight, loading and handling of a historically accurate gun so students could construct realistic muskets. Another worked with students to outline objects on their refrigerator box backdrop of cardboard before it was painted. Another worked with students applying the math required to draw a historically accurate American flag the size of another cardboard refrigerator box.. The construction time for the first building session was 2 hours. Completing the projects required three additional sessions led by Flicka that took two full days of school time plus additional time to locate and secure space for items to dry, safely protected from weather and people (Fieldnotes, March 20, 2012).

April and May 2012

In April the completed libretto went from being rehearsed in pieces over the week to daily rehearsals. The class rehearsed to a CD of the music they wrote recorded by Jake

(Fieldnotes, April 16, 2012). The dress rehearsal used all the elements in full running order as the show would be performed. The only piece missing was the audience. After running their dress rehearsal, students discussed being nervous about performing but displayed confidence that they knew what they were doing.

The presentation of the *American Revolution* opera was held in the school auditorium to a packed house; it was standing room only. Families, other classrooms, and staff lined the floors and walls. Ten other classrooms were working with the ARIA program the 2011-12 school year, and each class gave a performance over a two day period in mid-May.

The morning began with a rehearsal in the classroom led by Flicka without costumes as she stated "just leave them, don't even touch them, it would just be too much right now." Students used the recorded music to practice the spacing of performers and their volume for singing. Afterwards students fluttered around the room and Rudolpho offered words of encouragement to those who spoke in high pitched squeals and looked consumed with manic gestures. He said to them, "Don't worry, you'll be great!" or “it’s going to fun, you'll see." Xu Xian, Hoffman, Bao Zheng and Xue Xiang-Lin were laughing in a group, looking very excited but not particularly nervous (Fieldnotes, April 17, 2012).

Flicka then asked everyone to pick up and put on their vest costume piece. Students had customized their paper vests as period clothing. Students helped each other with their vests. Tape and staplers were employed to assist with last minute wardrobe malfunctions. The next task Flicka addressed was for students to gather in the auditorium. The students, almost on tippy toes, floated out of the room thinly attempting to disguise

their excitement. There was a short break in the noise, and then Rudolpho, Don Jose, Manon, Fraquista and Truong Vien picked up what they could carry and headed off to the auditorium.

On the way to the auditorium parents were lining the halls chatting in anticipation of the performance and catching up on plans for the summer. In the auditorium, as a visual indication of the schools commitment to arts programs and the PTA's efforts, stood the large rented stage on which the operas were performed. The auditorium had a class of students, quickly filling with other opera supporters. Students placed set pieces and props where they belonged on either side of the stage in preparation for their turn to perform and then joined their class who sat on the floor of the auditorium.

The principal of the school introduced the five operas that were presented on Tuesday, April 17, 2012. He also acknowledged the ARIA program to the crowd, and thanked his teachers, parents and students for all their hard work. *The American Revolution* opera was the final opera performed as operas were performed by the lower grades first. The performers of the world premiere of the opera, *The American Revolution,* were loud and clear in action and lyric. Bodies and set pieces flowed between scenes as rehearsed. Students sang on key and allowed themselves to be led into harmony by Jake at the piano. Thunderous applause and hollering followed, and with heads high and beaming smiles, the students bowed to their adoring crowd. Congratulatory exchanges raced between the students, and photos with family and friends took as long as the opera did to perform: 13 minutes (Fieldnotes, April 17, 2012).

Responses to Research Questions

Research Question 1

How Do Fifth Grade Students Assess The Impact of Participating in the San Francisco Opera's ARIA Program on Their Overall Learning and Academic Success?

Learning - That Which Students Can Apply to School, Work and Life

Engagement and Ownership. The activities which engaged students aligned with those named in interviews and teachers recounted as fruitful and fun for the students. The focus group stated they enjoyed the process in a variety of ways. Of the 14 students, 13 reported they enjoyed the entire process and noted three categories of enjoyment: "stuff they got to do," (Interview with Bao Zheng, February 14, 2012) and "stuff they got to make," (Interview with Micaela, February 14, 2012) and "making friends" (Interview with Rudolpho, February 14, 2012).

Acting began the list of activities students stated they "got to do." The focus group stated repeatedly, emphatically and enthusiastically that they enjoyed acting and singing. Don Jose said, "….sometimes I can experience, it's like you don't have to be who you really are you can pretend to be someone else" (Interview with Don Jose, February 14, 2012). That comment raised the volume of the conversation as others offered their experiences. Ti Ying added you can "be someone else for a while, just escape" (Interview with Ti Ying, February 14, 2012). Or as put by Frasquita, "You can be another character" (Interview with Frasquita, February 14, 2012). Student voices were again raised in agreement as one student stated that they enjoyed the feeling of getting to show off a bit.

Another activity that drew loud praise as "something to do" was singing. Of the eight females in the study group, seven self-reported to have a nice singing voice. Ti Ying, the one student who didn't say she liked singing on stage, stated she still thought it was good for her. Among the six males, none reported an opinion regarding their singing voice. In classroom observations the power and precision of Xu Xian's voice stood out. Noted was his clear diction and ability to remain on key with volume control enough to be heard as an individual singer or group member where required. When asked directly if he knew he had a great voice, Xu Xian smiled and said "yes" (Interview with Xu Xian, February 14, 2012). He was very humble about his talent. He did not ask for a solo in a song. He, like 12 others of the focus group, stated they really enjoyed singing in their opera; two stated they would have liked more solo lines to sing. Included in "something to do" games were named as "really great" and students commented they wanted more games in class.

Visual arts projects such as drawing the people and events of the time of the Boston Tea Party, costume design for characters, and drawings and models of set design options were also cited as fun. Creating lyrics was another activity listed as was working with production artists at school and visiting the scene shop as activities students really enjoyed. "Something to do" also included watching opera, listening to music, and learning about the social and political context of the American Revolution. Of the focus group, 12 of the 14 listed writing the opera as the highlight of their experience, and lastly 13 of 14 exclaimed they loved performing.

When talking about performing, students did note stage fright as a concern, but not as a problem. This contradicts observations that noted student's hesitation to stand

and share from their seats, standing at their desks, and reluctance to stand at the front of the group to share their ideas at the beginning of this process. The student-driven aspect of this process allowed students to practice taking risks sharing their ideas, giving and receiving feedback in a variety of situations (Fieldnotes, March 15, 2012).

Three students reported they loved an audience and had no stage fright. One student reported she avoided stage fright by thinking, “I feel comfortable because most people are, as Ariane put it, “people I will never see again,” or as Micaela stated, “people I’ll only know for 2–3 months so whatever.” (Interview with Micaela, March 8, 2012). Some students focused on something else to avoid stage fright, Bao Zheng said, “I just think about the song and not care about what they think.” (Interview with Bao Zheng, March 8, 2012). Xu Xian stated he had no stage fright because he was aware of his gift and although humble in conversation, had acknowledged that he is proud of it. Most students responded that they loved performing and got a bit nervous. Xue Xiang-Lin said, “Yes, I like performing because I only have stage fright when I’m alone, in a group I feel fine. I dislike being in the spotlight.” (Interview with Xue Xiang-Lin, March 8, 2012). Ti Ying reported she had terrible stage fright and disliked being on stage yet, she was “glad for the practice of behaving in front of a group because it will help me in my education.” (Interview with Ti Ying, March 8, 2012).

Under their category of stuff they “got to make” were building of the set, props, costumes, and the composing of the music and choreography/movements. Classroom observations listed the items built by the students: two back drop pieces; painted 12 foot by 8 foot main back drop; a second smaller back drop (used during the show); cardboard boxes constructed, painted, placed on stage and attached to the back drop; eight muskets

built, painted and placed on stage. There was a four-foot tall section of rolled paper used to represent the Declaration of Independence and a four-foot high quill pen built with a feather attached used by each student as they gestured signing the Declaration of Independence. And there were the thirty vests that were outlined, cut, stapled and then decorated with colored pens and pencils by each student as their costume piece. (Fieldnotes, March 15, 2012). Xu Xian commented about “not realizing how many people it took to get it done” (Interview with Xu Xian, March 13, 2012) and, Ariane added “how much there was to think about to make it happen” (Interview with Ariane, March 13, 2012). In prior interviews Xue Xiang-Lin stated “it sounded like fun” (Interview with Xue Xiang-Lin, February 21, 2012).

Under their category of "making new friends" students reported they believed this occurred because much of the ARIA process happened in groups that may have been working together for the first time. Groups of students working together during this process were determined by Flicka, Sheri, or the project a student was working on. Students visited more tables and joined in chatting with groups of students seamlessly over the school year (Fieldnotes, March 1, 2012).

The more opportunities given to students to engage verbally, with gesture, in writing, and in research sharing, through acting, singing and design, the more the process meant to them. The more of their work and ideas were included, the more the wanted to add to their opera. Students’ fears lessened as their engagement with the process grew (Fieldnotes, March 6, 2012).

Student Voice. The focus group wanted to add a category of “learning new things” to their list of learning. This was reported loudly and with enthusiasm by the

entire focus group. Interestingly the activities students listed as “new” were those in which students had decision-making power. Students revealed that activities listed as “new” were the same activities listed as things they “got to make.” From the focus group’s point of view, they were making up a new dramatic story about the American Revolution, new movements about people at war, their own visual arts interpretations of the people and events of the time, their own music, and what Manon called “the arts within academic disciplines”(Interview with Manon, March 8, 2012). The focus group was not consciously repeating the list of “what they got to make,” as the list of “learning new things,” but these lists matched. This focus group believed learning occurred when they had an active voice and voting power (Fieldnotes, March 15, 2012).

Student voice was imperative in the creation of their opera as the teachers applied the ARIA curriculum and guided students through making decisions. Teachers in interviews confirmed that student voice was vital in opera creation with the ARIA program. Students reflected on wanting to contribute more than they did to the structure and process for opera creation (Interview with focus group, April 16, 2012).

Education- That Which Relates to Standards Directly Within the Curriculum

The focus group confirmed that there were curricular connections between their school work and the opera making process. Students stated they thought they were receiving an education working with the ARIA program, which Xue Xiang-Lin described as “the stuff school wants you to know” (Interview with Xue Xiang-Lin, April 16, 2012). The subjects of English, mathematics, science and history were those students considered to be education. Daphne added “the body” to the list of subjects, describing it as “using your vocal chords and stuff.” Xu Xian reported that education is a “big start to a healthy

future” (Interview with Xu Xian, April 16, 2012). Bao Zheng stated that education is “getting a lot of information” (Interview with Bao Zheng, April 16, 2012) while Ti Ying described education as a chance to “learn from our mistakes” (Interview with Ti Ying, April 16, 2012). Hoffman offered a further description of education as “the gaining of knowledge in the brain and what you do with that knowledge afterwards…..education would be learning over a long period of time” (Interview with Hoffman, April 16, 2012). Xu Xian reported:

> Education helps you in the future if you’re like a businessman and you don’t like know how to talk, or like what like two plus two is. You won’t like know how to like… like make shops. Like make new shops at different places. And imagination is, if there wasn’t imagination there wouldn’t be like books that you can read and for your vocabulary, and there wouldn’t be like words. And there wouldn’t be like any books in the world. (Interview with Xu Xian, February 21, 2012)

As Don Jose recounted his thoughts, he blended ideas about education and art:

> Education is really important because say you really want to be an artist, you know how the skill to like be able to brush straight. Without education most likely you would go like this *[uses his hand to gesture a swerved line*] and the also for education you would need like, say like imagination, if it wasn’t for imagination, imagination and education goes with math, you have to go into the book shelve. Say Selena Gomez and that book shelf, over there, you need the mathematics to build it, so she can have the book shelves. (Interview with Don Jose, February 21, 2012)

English Language Arts. Students connected with the entire fifth grade English Language Arts (E.L.A.) Standards during the research phase and the editing phase of opera creation. The E.L.A. Content Standards for the State of California are reading, writing, English language conventions, listening and speaking. The students stated they experienced language arts curriculum through: (a) presenting their story ideas to the class, (b) writing, structuring and editing the story, (c) creating the music, (d) constructing the lyrics, (e), labeling and discussing their design ideas, and (f) reading. All

of these activities require decision making and negotiation, which are the framework for building critical thinking skills (Fieldnotes, March 20, 2012). Regarding learning about opera in particular, Hoffman unknowingly reported a connection between the opera and the E.L.A. standards:

> Opera is usually based on fiction, like historical fiction so it helps us to learn about like, like what type of like, what type of opera it is. Like what type of book we could get it from. We can learn a lot of information like, maybe like *Carmen* right? I think like maybe they got like the name from like a history book or something like that. (Interview with Hoffman, February 21, 2012)

History and Social Studies. Flicka chose the History Content Standards for the State of California in fifth grade of: (a) 5.5 in which students explain the causes of the American Revolution, (b) 5.6 in which students understand the course and consequences of the American Revolution, and (c) 5.7 in which students are able to describe the people and events associated with the development of the U.S. Constitution and analyze the Constitution's significance as the foundation of the American republic (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012). Cross curricular connections between the opera ELA and History/Social studies were achieved through reading, writing, research, physicalizing the drama of how people felt in their story; and thinking about what the people who were living through these events in history experienced. For example, the realities of the time prompted classroom conversations about if and how to use guns in the student's depiction of the American Revolution.

Ideas about the right to bear arms, the desire not to have guns everywhere, and learning about period rifles and the possibly fatal infections that followed gun shot wounds were big class discussions. Additionally, critical arguments were made on both sides of the gender consideration regarding who got to sign the Declaration of

Independence. Feeding their knowledge on these topics were visual arts projects they created about the time (Fieldnotes, November 10, 2011).

The focus group talked about and then created actions and gestures for characters based on what the students knew about characters' daily lives and hardships. Ti Ying, Fraquista and Rudolpho stated they believed there were behavioral lessons in education as well as informational (Fieldnotes, January 5, 2012). An example given by Rudolpho was "that after you learned how to work in or with a group, you should do your best when you work in a group" (Interview with Rudolpho, January 5, 2012).

Imagination- That Which is Creative Expression

Students repeatedly stated their imaginations were not encouraged in their schoolwork (Fieldnotes, March 13, 2012). Daphne described imagination as "like being able to think about things that you don't see" (Interview with Daphne, March 8, 2012). Micaela noted imagination was "like staying away from just the facts" (Interview with Micaela, March 8, 2012). Ti Ying referred to imagination as "experimentation" and a process for "making ways" (Interview with Ti Ying, March 8, 2012). Daphne reflected on imagination, "Like what Micaela said, 'you don't have to see it; you can just like believe it.' And then I thought of this quote that was about like the key to knowledge is imagination, not like, knowledge or something" (Interview with Daphne, March 8, 2012). And Hoffman again made connections between ideas as he shared

> so imagination can help you think…. What I do sometimes is I imagine cool cars, like flying cars, I think those flying cars might be a wave of the future, the education is a lot of stuff you learn and then you need a lot of imagination. If I am going to be a scientist, again, education, you need to learn a lot of stuff and you also need a lot of imagination. (Interview with Hoffman, March 8, 2012)

Student definitions of imagination connected ideas about having personal expression. Frasquita described another layer of imagination as "What you believe in, what your thoughts are, basically part of you. If you don't have imagination you will never have hopes. So without imagination you can't dream…..you can't be yourself, your unique self" (Interview with Frasquita, March 8, 2012). Frasquita's description slowed the exchange of ideas and students quieted down for a few seconds as they considered her ideas on imagination. The whole focus group gave a collective gasp and then a laugh of recognition as Fraquista revealed her family's thoughts on what school could be with the phrase they use at home "imagication," the combination of imagination and education (Fieldnotes, March 8, 2012).

The students talked most often about their concerns that education and imagination were at odds with each other in school. Students stated they enjoyed the history/social studies and language arts curriculum when they were adding their imaginations into the process. This topic arose in interviews about the ARIA program and quickly moved to address schooling on the whole (Fieldnotes, March 8, 2012). Xue Xiang-Lin began with the statement "I think education and imagination are all combined" (Interview with Xue Xiang-Lin, March 8, 2012). With that said, all focus group members raised their hands and voices, and a heated conversation ensued. Students cheered on Ariane as she stated that education would not suffer with the inclusion of their imaginations. In fact, they believed their education would be improved if their "imagications" were included as Frasquita suggested (Fieldnotes, March 8, 2012).

Learning Applied Outside the Curriculum

Xue Xiang-Lin stated students learned things working with the ARIA program that they can “use other places.” (Interview with Xue Xiang-Lin, March 13, 2012). All members of the focus group were involved in extracurricular groups. Either due to parent work schedules or student interests, 11 of the 14 student participants were enrolled in after school programs at the school site. Students reported the skills they were using in making their opera were skills they used in the clubs and groups they belonged to (Fieldnotes, March 13, 2012). Xu Xian suggested “team building” (Interview with Xue Xiang-Lin, March 13, 2012). Bao Zheng’s suggested “negotiating” (Interview with Bao Zheng, March 13, 2012). Frasquita’s suggested “planning” (Interview with Frasquita, March 13, 2012), and Ariane suggested speaking up for what you think is right (Interview with Ariane, March 13, 2012) as skills they would use outside the classroom.

Summary

The focus group was interested in discussing their experiences working with the SFO ARIA program. The students assessed their learning through how much they enjoyed an activity and its educational content. They judged the educational content based on how much it connected to their knowledge and their educational requirements. They valued the inclusion of imagination based on the invitation to articulate their ideas with the group and have voting power. They deemed the ARIA program as valuable because they believed they were learning things while applying their imagination. Students were aware they were learning a variety of ideas and approaches to problem solving in class and out of school. The focus group ranked getting up and learning actively as the highest rated teaching method (Fieldnotes, April 16, 2012). Hoffman’s

following comment garnered agreement from the focus group with nods, grunts when he said

> What I'd like to add to his is that like it's interesting because you get to learn something and it's fun learning it. So it's not just like okay class, we are going to be learning about the American Revolution, for the next couple of months, whoo hoo, like you get to act it out and sing and stuff…all the creativity that comes along with it and you get to teach other people about it in a fun way, like singing it to people." (Interview with Hoffman, April 16, 2012)

Research Question 2

How Do the Teachers Assess the Impact of Participating in the San Francisco Opera's ARIA Program on Students Overall Learning and Academic Success?

Interviews with Flicka, Sheri and Jake provided data regarding how teachers assessed the impact on students' overall learning and academic success working with the SFO ARIA program. The teachers defined the terms, "education," "learning," and "imagination," a little differently than did the student participants, but reported that all three occurred for students as they worked with the SFO ARIA program. Flicka described education in two ways: first, as the required California State Standards, and second, as assisting students in negotiating the demands of prescribed curriculum and connecting their understanding of themselves to the world (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012). Sheri described learning as "exposure to and the practice of new ideas and concepts" (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012) and Jake described imagination as "seeing your dreams happen (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012).

All three teachers believed creative expression was key for students to enjoy and engage in creating an opera and that the ARIA program provided numerous opportunities across curriculum for creative expression. The three major themes for the teachers understanding of how students assessed the ARIA program were enjoyment of the

process, working across the curriculum, and learning outside the classroom. These were the themes teachers used in assessing the impact of the ARIA program on students' overall learning and academic success (Fieldnotes, February 16, 2012).

Enjoyment of the Process

Flicka described the students' enjoyment of the ARIA process. Flicka's experiences and training led her to believe that the more invested the students were in a project, the harder they worked, and that they worked harder when they saw their ideas grow. Flicka reported that when students enjoyed tasks they became more invested in the understanding them. Flicka believed that the students would have retained a smaller percentage of what they discovered about the Boston Tea Party and the American Revolution through reading alone. Due to the range of active learning opportunities, the students "will always remember lots about the Boston Tea Party" (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012).

Sheri's process for working in the classroom was to state the visual need in a scene and then invite students to solve the problem. For example, she said to the class, "We have agreed we want the audience to see people hurting on the inside and out." Next she asked the students how they thought they could make that happen. The students raised their hands and offered staging suggestions. Most of the staging ideas came from the students. Her job was to take those ideas and assist students in telling the audience the story with visual clarity and well-defined actions (Fieldnotes, January 19, 2012). Sheri believed the students' opportunities to practice new ideas led to greater confidence that fed their enjoyment of the process (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012).

Jake stated he believed the creative expression students demonstrated supported their enjoyment of the process through their confidence in musicianship. He reported witnessing students taking risks vocally, in the editing of lyrics, and in suggesting musical patterns for tunes. Jake introduced a range of tools musicians have used in composing music to the students. He said he believed giving the students tools to solve musical problems was a powerful way for them to enjoy gaining skills as musicians, movers, singers. He added that students demonstrated both vocal and physical enthusiasm when they were invited into creative exploration and problem solving. Jake reported he felt the group grew in their willingness to work as an ensemble and enjoyed working as a group at the end (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012).

When he began with the class, very few students sung out, or wanted to risk sounding off tune. There was a shift halfway through Jake's visits, in which the class did more than sing as a group. They took ownership of the way the music should sound, and 12 of the 14 student participants of the study focused on consistently being heard clearly and singing as part of a group (Fieldnotes, March 20, 2012).

The three teachers shared the opinion that students were not always aware of when and what they were learning and had retained a lot of information about the core curriculum and the arts content. An example given by Sheri of student learning through creative expression related to core curriculum was "acting out how one thinks a character might behave in a given circumstance" (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012). An example given by Jake was "applying different thinking routines" to demonstrate learning using creation expression (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012). The teachers believed the students expressed their new knowledge about the American Revolution as

they contributed to staging, designing, managing and performing the show (Fieldnotes, February 16, 2012). On the day of the performance each teacher stated they were not surprised that the students were able to create a cohesive narrative around their curriculum and perform it as an opera (Fieldnotes, April 17, 2012).

Working Across the Curriculum

Flicka, Sheri and Jake concurred that making an ARIA opera added to the students' education, learning and imaginations through a student-focused, closely guided and academically structured, research and inquiry-framed process. Flicka offered "Many ways of applying research skills" (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012), Sheri offered "problem solving" (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012) and Jake offered "team building" (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012) as examples of skills the students applied across the curriculum and outside the classroom. Flicka reported on how she introduced her students to opera:

> Sheri brought this project the first year I think, the story arc, and we always use an opera to do the story arc. It breaks down the structure of story. We do it by always starting out the year reading *The Magic Flute* together, and performing it in sections in class. Then we go to an opera. I mean it makes teaching so much for interesting for me because it's; it's more fun that way than if we're just reading the, you know, prescribed Basal readers that they give us. Ah, but it makes it more meaningful for the kids too. (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012)

Story structure and character analysis were a large part of Grade 5 ELA curriculum. Acting out the scenes addressed additional ELA standards of interpretation, listening and speaking and most theater standards. Attending a live opera allowed students to draw from the theoretical, the practical and personal experiences they had with opera to reflect on genres of narration, performance and story structure (Fieldnotes,

January, 12, 2012). Next Flicka moved her students through exercises in character development.

> There is an activity that I use every year, ah in terms of literacy that is memorable. I think it was the first PD that we ever went to where we did that *Magic Flute* letter writing activity?… Where we had to write a letter from one character in the opera to another character. And writing it was difficult but then listening to the other people's letters I got such a better grasp on who the other characters were by hearing all of the different correspondences. (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012)

The students listened to other characters' points of view. Flicka made sure her students read, listened to, wrote about and physically created the story of *The Magic Flute*. In so doing, students sustained connections to the curriculum for kinesthetic, verbal and visual learners.

> And so every year I've done that with my kids with their opera, we read *The Magic Flute*, we do character maps. They have to draw a picture of the character and show what they're thinking, what their doing, what their feelings, so there's a lot of inference happening. And then they have to take it a step further and choose two characters to write a letter from one to the other. They have to say why they might write a letter to each other, what their relationship is, what the person would say and why. (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012)

With this process students identified a range of relationships and feelings that occurred in the story, as they attributed them to characters and justified their actions. Opera reveals events in music, visually and in narrative stories. The combination of these elements again catered to a range of learning styles and active, engaged learning (Fieldnotes, November 17, 2011).

> And I have gotten the craziest things like; you know Sarastro is suing the Queen of the Night for child support or vice versa. But the kids, they get it! And these are complicated characters; I mean the story is not simple…But using *The Magic Flute*, I mean it's, it's something that I've done every year and every year it's successful. (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012)

As Flicka noted her success with this routine for introducing students to opera and working through Grade 5 curriculum, her enthusiasm was palpable. She stated her conviction that when students worked across curriculum, they learned at a deeper level due to the need for students to make connections between subjects and learning styles (Interview with Flicka, March 6, 2012).

Learning Applied Outside the Curriculum

Flicka noted the students' skills improved in a) critical thinking as seen in the construction and analysis of problem solving, b) personal verbal expression asserted in quantity and quality of classrooms discussions, c) team work as exercised through their willingness and skills in working in small and large groups, and d) project management demonstrated in the organization of information, the dissemination of information, and follow through of goals in the timely manner. Flicka reported students grew inside and outside the curricular demands of fifth grade. She commented students would apply those skills practiced with the ARIA program in other areas of their lives. An example Flicka offered as a shift in student behavior was the students' increased ability to articulate their ideas, blend those ideas in conversation, and then create solutions for their opera. She believed that the structure of small group work aided students in their comfort to speak about what might or might not work in the opera and why (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012).

Sheri stated students developed their skills as group members, "listening better to each other and being willing to hear suggestions to their ideas" (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012). Jake recounted how students "over time were more facially expressive,

relaxed, focused and laughed as a group in rehearsals" (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012).

Summary

The teachers reported that the duration and scope of the ARIA program allowed for sustained engagement with a breadth of connections. Even though the school site provided a number of opportunities for active learning through a range of other arts programs they stated the ARIA program was most well rounded to attain deep learning. Agreed between the teachers was the empowering impact of student voice on student learning. The student-driven process provided a unique experience even at this arts-rich school. All three teachers confirmed that enjoyment of the opera making process, curricular connections as a foundation for the process, and skills practiced in class all assisted students in negotiating the world inside and outside their classroom (Fieldnotes, April 17, 2012).

At the end of the school year, as they do each year, the school conducted a fifth grade graduation reflection. Flicka recounted that the ARIA program always ranked at the top of their list of things students did and enjoyed. This year was no different. Flicka said, "Everyone liked something, nobody said, oh no why did we do opera?" (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012). All three teachers stated that having a long-standing relationship with the material and each other made the program feel cohesive and facilitated collaborative teaching with clearly defined roles (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012; Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012; Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012).

Research Question 3

How Do The Students and The Classroom Teacher Believe The SFO ARIA Program Might Be Altered To Enrich Its Impact on Students?

Student Recommendations

Student recommendations for the ARIA program focused on three areas: process, production, and performance. Regarding process, students wanted the following changes: (a) To "hold opera time more than once a week" (Interview Frasquita, February 14, 2012). This idea was shared by 12 of the 14 students; (b) To "develop text as a whole class, not in small groups" (Interview with Micaela, February 21, 2012). This idea was shared by 12 of the 14 students; (c) To allow more flexibility in the story construction of the opera while retaining curricular goals (Fieldnotes, February 21, 2012). This idea was shared by all 14 students; (d) To return to auditions in order to "make casting less frustrating" (Interview with Manon, February 21, 2012). The entire focus group expressed a preference for auditioning rather than volunteering for a role, and (e) To provide an "evening performance" for parents and family who could not attend during the school day (Interview with Frasquita, February 14, 2012). Students also wanted to acknowledge that the process of majority rule was a hard process to be happy with all the time (Interview with Don Jose, February 14, 2012).

The student recommendations for teachers were: (a) To allow increased student voice in the classroom (Interview with Hoffman, February 14, 2012); (b) To compromise better through voting on a daily agenda and giving activity options (Interview with Rudolpho, February 21, 2012); (c) To stay on the predetermined timeline for class work (Interview with Frasquita, February 21, 2012), and (d) To listen to more students'

suggestions before making a decision on a solution (Interview with Micaela, February 14, 2012). Students wanted their voice to have a larger and more powerful place in the classroom and the overall decision-making process (Fieldnotes, April 16, 2012).

The student recommendations for other students were unanimously agreed upon when Ti Ying said, "Students need more patience with each other, and they need to compromise better" (Interview with Ti Ying, March 8, 2012). Truong Vien added, "I don't' really enjoy that ah, sometime the groups disagreeing that you're working with…." He continued, "Students spoke out of turn and that students need to do more attentive listening and not talk out of turn" (Interview with Trong Vien, March 8, 2012). Students also suggested that it was more fun and helpful when lots of students participated (Interview with Rudolpho, February 21, 2012).

Teacher Recommendations

A suggestion for the ARIA program from all three teachers was to have more time in the classroom devoted to opera. Flicka stated what was needed was more time in the school day for classroom teachers to work with this cross-curricular process (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012). Sheri did not have a recommendation for the program and reported she enjoyed teaching the program as it stands (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012). Jake relayed that his desire is always the same as a composer, that students have more exposure to music, music vocabulary and musicals structure. He also mentioned this is his always his request with any music program (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012). The teachers asserted the ARIA program prepared students for the material they would be tested on and contended the predetermined curriculum was addressed and incorporated into the student exploration of the American Revolution. The three teachers

reported the ARIA program functioned as a well-rounded, well-supported process with high standards and expectations for all who participated, making it deserving of more classroom time.

Summary

The four major generative themes for the focus group working with the ARIA program were: (a) Learning-that which students can apply to school, work and life; (b) Education-that which is related to standards directly with the curriculum; (c) Imagination-that which is creative expression; and (d) Applied learning outside of school. Reflecting on the whole process, students believed the number one positive impact of working with the ARIA program was stimulating their imaginations. They stated they experienced learning, education, and got to know others better while applying their imagination in the creation of their opera. Students were firm and clear that they wanted more inclusion of their imaginations throughout their school time (Fieldnotes, April 16, 2012).

The three major themes teachers had for assessing the impact on students working with the ARIA program were enjoyment of the process, cross-curricular activities, and learning students apply outside the curriculum. Teachers also described the positive impact of helping students to “connect directly with the curriculum through active learning” (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012), having “more of a voice in the classroom” (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012), and “creating something they then shared with others” (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012). Changes students and teachers both suggested revolved around having more time to do opera in class. Both students and

teachers felt they learned a great deal from working with the ARIA program in the classroom (Fieldnotes, April 16, 2012).

The students laughed often, grew more verbally and physically confident and socially closer. The students became more relaxed and took more risks sharing ideas and rebounding from criticism with new ideas. They ended the year an active, supportive team (Fieldnotes, April 16, 2012).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This study's findings affirmed that the focus group of 14 fifth grade students enjoyed and learned from performing as well as writing, designing and producing their own opera, *The American Revolution*. These findings were corroborated by the students' classroom teacher and the two ARIA teaching artists who stated the process had a positive impact on students' overall learning. Teachers described the opera-making process as an engaging cross-curricular, inquiry based project that invited students' imagination, knowledge and skills into the creation of an opera.

Applying imagination in school was the number one issue students raised about schooling on the whole. Students described imagination as part of themselves that aided their thinking, enjoyment of school activities and improved their problem solving abilities. They recounted that making an opera employed their imagination, but they wanted their imagination involved in all their schoolwork. They also reported that they perceived their imagination to be discouraged at school.

The student focus group recommended that the ARIA program lengthen the opera, increase the number of songs, and add more extensive sets, props and costumes. In short, the students wanted more of all the elements of opera. Regarding group work, they recommended that students working with the ARIA program show more patience for each other, which, according to the students, would increase their ability to work as a team.

The teachers' recommendations stood somewhat in contrast to the students' point of view; the teachers, Flicka, Sheri and Jake contended that keeping the program a cross-curricular process was helped by the limits of three songs, three acts and a running time for the opera of 10-15 minutes. Teachers stated these parameters allowed the class to cover the English language arts (ELA), history/social studies and visual and performing arts (VAPA) Standards for connections prescribed by the classroom teacher for this opera. The classroom teacher's suggestion for program adjustment was to have more time during the school day devoted to cross-curricular work. Flicka stated that this was a structured way to bridge curriculum and their imaginations (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012). Interestingly, the students and teachers offered differing recommendations that would both further the inclusion of students' imaginations at school. The teachers regarded this program as a direct line to the imaginations of the students as they learned a deal.

The school site offered a great range of support for the arts. Students had programs that gave access to music, drama, movement and the visual arts over time and throughout the school year. The school site PTA aggressively raised money for arts programs for the school site (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012).

Through interviews and observations of the ARIA program in the context of this fifth grade class, I concluded the ARIA process was engaging, inspiring and educational for the students and the classroom teacher. The students had the ability to identify elements of the American Revolution and demonstrated their understanding through a lengthy research process that integrated visual, verbal and kinesthetic learners. The process effectively actualized ELA, history/social studies and VAPA standards to

reinforce the students' learning through the process of developing the opera performance. Their learning was visible and recounted by both students and teachers, classroom observations and their adoring fans on the day of their presentation. The school promoted these goals and methods of learning through completing 11 classroom operas in the 2011-12 school year.

Discussion

Student-Centered Learning Includes Student Voice

The findings of this study revealed that the arts-integrated curriculum implemented was a student-centered learning process and, as such, was greatly informed by student voice. The ARIA process required the inclusion of students' prior knowledge, imagination, and problem-solving skills to create their own opera. Students referred in a variety of ways to being invested in the process when they had voting power. A method that developed student skills as researchers, writers and designers of their own opera was through a number of playful activities that engaged students' bodies, voices and imaginations. The level of power promoted by bringing in student voice increased engagement and commitment of the students. After researching and developing the opera, students took verbal and physical pride in their choices and increased their willingness to work as group. Those activities tied directly to the curriculum chosen by the classroom teacher (Fieldnotes, March 1, 2012).

This study found similarities to other research on student-made operas in schools. Joy's (2002) research found that student-centered learning with coherent procedures for opera creation and sustained practice was enjoyed by students and was instructive across curriculum. In Wolf's (1999) study, teachers reported that creating an opera made "the

students work harder and smarter" (p.93). Similar to this study, Rossi (1997) concluded that when student voice was invited into classroom conversation, students found points of connection and comfort with the curriculum. Rossi also found that the English language learning student population came alive through arts projects that incorporated the curriculum into creating an opera. This study confirmed the research by Joy (2002), Wolf (1999) and Rossi (1997) regarding the increased willingness of students to take risks within a group through the playful and expressive opera-making process.

Additional researchers focused on student voice as central to the construction of engaging learning environments. For example, Mitra (2009a) stated that inclusion of student voice was crucial in creating sustained student-centered learning, as did Levin (2000b) in Canada, and Rudduck (2004) in the U.K. Both Levin (2000a) and Rudduck (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004) worked toward reforming the basic lens with which we view the place of students in the conversation around their place in education. Cook-Sather (2007) added that student voices could provide focused insights into how education is experienced by students and a unique awareness about what educators cannot know from where they stand in the room and in the conversation.

Engagement of students with focused activities in conjunction with academic curriculum was crucial for both Dewey and Heathcote's definitions of student-centered learning (Dewey, 1934; Wagner, 1976). Reflected in the work of Dewey (1902) and Heathcote (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995) are the views of the researchers mentioned above as they view students with a role to play as benefactors and contributors to student-centered learning. It is up to teachers to create learning environments in which students

participate while developing and testing out approaches to sharing the power of the classroom (Shor, 1996).

On a personal note, during my doctoral study, I have witnessed in my teaching and read about the power of student-centered learning in ways that were new to me. I must confess when I began as a teacher, I feared losing control of a class. As a professor of theater, I worked in a discipline that lent itself to gradually integrate student voice into structuring classes more and more. When I have had the greatest success in inviting students into the process is when I have done deep contingency planning, or the "what if" lesson plans in my back pocket. Then I have the structure to keep students feeling safe and working on task. This process has improved my teaching. What I experience now in sharing the power, perks and responsibilities of creating a learning environment has provided exponentially more learning for the students and for myself.

Working Across Curriculum

In this study, curriculum for all VAPA, ELA and selective history and social studies standards were included during the ARIA process. Standards were integrated, investigated and brought to life by students as they created their opera. The ARIA program was able to accomplish the creation of a supported learning environment through preparing the teachers with clear flexible curriculum and teacher training.

As part of professional development throughout the school year, teaching artists and classroom teachers worked together and experienced the arts as stand-alone disciplines and the arts woven into lesson planning across curriculum. Classroom teachers practiced and witnessed a range of methods to apply the arts throughout their curriculum. As a result, classroom teachers and teaching artists were able to steer the

students in creating their opera together. Findings of this study and the research literature support working across curriculum as a sustained method for increasing student engagement.

Many studies using arts across the curriculum have demonstrated successful opportunities for aiding student learning regarding skills that are difficult to quantify yet crucial to progressive education. Catterall (2002) addressed student gains in social development when applying the arts across curriculum. Claudio's (2002) study on engaging young bilingual students working across curriculum confirmed the positive impact that varied points of connection had upon their comfort and success with ELA curriculum. Heath and Mangiola (1991) presented data in which literacy skills had been translated into active exercises. All researchers reported students found places to connect and absorb curriculum across disciplines using the arts.

Arts-integrated curriculum provides platforms for witnessing how students are learning to be, live, behave, and know what is expected of them and what they can expect of others. The arts also create opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. Through using these methods we increase chances of finding tools to measure an accurate and well rounded assessment of student growth.

Methods for working across curriculum were articulated in the compendium of 62 studies, "Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development (Deasy, 2002). Within academic circles focused on learning in the arts as well as students' academic and social development, these studies were considered an informed resource (Sroufe, 2004). Educators looking for an arts organization with proven practice for successful art-integrated and well-planned, curriculum supported by trained

teachers and teaching artists should consult Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) (Aprill, 2010).

Imagination

Albert Einstein (as cited in Viereck, 1929) said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there will ever be to know and understand.” (p.17). In the second interview Daphne recited this first sentence of Einstein’s quote in a comment on how important she believed imagination to be. The quote was on her watch band at home.

In the fourth interview students were asked to name the biggest impact of the ARIA program on their experience of learning about the American Revolution. They unanimously blurted out: “imagination!” The ARIA process enlisted student imagination to create an opera. Expressions of their ideas were delivered in writing and other artistic formats. Student-led research and time, structured for reflection, were all employed as strategies for the exposition of student imagination (Fieldnotes, April 16, 2012).

Burton (Burton et al., 1999), Burnaford (Burnaford et al., 2001), Fiske (1999), Stevenson and Deasy (2005) maintained that imagination was fundamental to meaningful learning. Supporting these findings, Eilber (Hardiman, et al., 2009) reported that the brain’s ability to connect data to critical thinking skills was largely stimulated by the imagination. In the pursuit of connecting imagination to critical thinking skills, Eisner (2002) and Greene (2000) reported embracing students’ imagination can create engaging activities to pursue learning that deepens and enriches their educations and lives. Dewey (1934) and Heathcote (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) maintained that a life without

imagination is a life not fully lived, an idea supported by the students desire for school to be imagination plus education is “imagication,” according to Frasquita (December 5, 2012).

Learning Applied Outside the Curriculum

Students relayed ways they applied their learning through the ARIA process outside their classroom. As evidence for where and how skills outside the curriculum were applied, Bao Zheng stated, “We are all in student government here at school” referring to the members of the focus group (Interview with Bao Zheng, March 8, 2012). Don Jose phrased one of these skills as, “Talking to people you don’t usually talk to” (Interview Don Jose, March 8, 2012). Ting Yi said her experience of working with the ARIA process had been helpful in “Getting comfortable talking” (Interview with Ting Yi, March 8, 2012). Frasquita added group work helped them to “Try out other people’s ideas” (Interview with Frasquita, March 8, 2012). Students practiced these skills throughout the ARIA process and spoke with a sense of pride and accomplishment about their group membership skills (Fieldnotes, April 17, 2012). Teachers agreed that creating an opera presented many opportunities for students to practice skills in community membership that contributed to their “personal” (Interview with Sheri, April 11, 2012), “musical” (Interview with Jake, April 5, 2012) and “academic success” (Interview with Flicka, April 26, 2012).

Learning applied outside the curriculum can mean many things. Banks (2004) asked that we contemplate the skills, rights and responsibilities in being members of a global citizenry, and within that framework having group membership skills is pivotal. How students investigate their identities is another example of learning outside of the

curriculum. The studies of Claudio (2002) who used drama techniques to pursue questions regarding methods for student personal empowerment, Porteous (2003) who enlisted drama structures to investigate with her student participants ideas concerning identity formation, and Spence-Campbell (2008) who employed drama approaches to cultivate a better understanding of tactics for developing the critical imagination, all came to the conclusion that creative expression enhanced student confidence. They also concluded that it contributed to a range of skills gained outside the curriculum that assisted in practicing group membership. With the acquisition of group membership skills, students were then prepared to participate in and explore local and global communities outside the curriculum. Being active members of communities lay at the core of the work of Dewey (1916) and Heathcote (Wagner, 1976). As Dewey (1930) stated

> Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving...conflict is a sine qua non of [essential to] reflection and ingenuity.

To relate Dewey to how arts-integrated curriculum can foster learning outside the curriculum, I would interpret his word "conflict" to mean a problem to be solved, "observation and memory" as research and reflection, and "instigates to invention" as engaging student imagination and critical thinking to problem solve. Based upon my research in this study, I believe arts-integrated curriculum is the strongest methodology for comprehensive learning that students can apply in and out of the classroom.

Summary

Student-centered learning as described by Dewey (1897), student voice as prescribed by Fielding (2004), working across curriculum as applied by Aprill (2010) and

Heathcote (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995), imagination as included by Eisner (2002), and learning applied outside the curriculum instigated in the classroom as written about by Banks (2004) are all elements of progressive education and are required for classroom teachers to be successful. When these components of education are framed clearly in integrated curriculum introduced incrementally, with time for practice, reflection and improvement, students find points of connection. These strategies promote fun, engaged, learning that students incorporate into their school work and lives. I look forward to returning to the school and viewing the 2012-13 world opera premieres created by these veteran opera makers.

Recommendations

Teacher Training

Based upon the findings in this study as well as the research literature, I propose three recommendations for teacher training. First, working collaboratively is a skill that can be taught. We ask our students to practice collaboration starting in kindergarten. Unfortunately, teachers are not uniformly trained to work collaboratively and commonly work alone in the classroom. Training in collaboration would allow teachers to work in teams, sharing knowledge of their disciplines and best practice methods. Quality training in collaboration would model collaboration and encourage teachers to practice collaboration with students. It is my recommendation that teachers be trained to work in collaboration with other educators as well as students.

Second, teachers need training in all state-prescribed disciplines. Creating connections between prescribed disciplines requires teachers to have training in the arts. Therefore, it is my recommendation that teacher training include all prescribed subjects,

enabling multiple and single subject teachers to create connections between disciplines. Professional development should be made available for faculty and staff prior to and during a transition to integrated curriculum.

The third recommendation is that teachers be trained in curriculum integration. If teachers are trained to apply their knowledge of curriculum building to all prescribed curriculum, arts-integrated curriculum will logically follow. With these three recommendations in place, teachers will be equipped to collaborate confidently and competently in creating connections between disciplines, and designing integrated student-centered curriculum.

Pedagogy, Curriculum and Classroom Organization

My recommendation for pedagogy and curriculum is to articulate and make explicit a process for inviting student voice into the development of age-appropriate learning communities in K-12 public schools. Democratic decision-making could be implemented with definitive and clear boundaries and rules of engagement appropriate to the classroom. Inviting student voice into schoolwork would be aided by curriculum structured similarly to the student-driven decision process executed by the ARIA program. Student imagination and prior knowledge could be incorporated through writing, discussion, reading, visual art projects, theatre games and exercises, singing and movement in all disciplines. This process would also institute multiple points of connection appropriate for verbal, visual and kinesthetic learners.

My recommendation for classroom organization is that classroom time be spent efficiently through consistent classroom readiness and organization. This would include having assigned spaces for people, supplies, furniture and clear guidelines for steps of

tasks during class time Without such conscious organization, arts projects sound, look, feel and can be chaotic rather than sequential. This can be applied to all lessons; readiness maintains student engagement and momentum across curriculum.

Further Research

My recommendation is that researchers of pedagogy make their findings easily accessible and understandable to all stakeholders in K-16 education through local school boards, online, and the PTA. A further recommendation is that a number of future studies be conducted similar to those of Catterall, Dumais, and Hampden-Thompson (2012). Their four longitudinal studies investigated the civic behavior and academic achievement outcomes of teenagers and young adults who had engaged deeply with the arts in or out of school. The authors tracked families of lower socioeconomic background in order to account for the variable of student access to the arts outside of school. The rationale was that access to the arts is too often a privilege enjoyed by higher income families.

Catterall et al's (2012) two largest studies each exceeded 22,000 students and considered the students' whole life experience. I contend this is a crucial element for research. The varied methods for data collection included youth and parent interviews, annual youth interviews, child assessments and questionnaires of students, parents and school administrators and transcripts. The studies tracked students for an average of eight years, a level of investigation that allows educators to know more about how and what students learn than a standalone math test.

I recommend longitudinal investigations into the qualities of what Wolf (1999) called "sustained coherent collaboration that supports the development of a taste for more than convenient solutions or a capacity for understanding complex meanings" (p.99).

This level of inquiry assists educators, policy makers and parents to reflect on and construct best educational practices and curricular content.

In pursuing mixed methods for inquiry and assessment, I have three recommended policy questions for future studies. First, how can students demonstrate their academic gains through creative expression for assessment? Second, what is the process for a principal to imbed arts integrated curriculum in their school? Third, how can schools educate parents about the personal, social and academic benefits to students of the process of making art?

Conclusions

The education of our children leaves no room for apathy; everyone needs to be involved. The hope of this study was to offer an example of an effective arts-integrated program that incorporated the perspectives of the student and teacher participants. One goal of the study was to elucidate an observed method of pedagogy and curriculum for engaged student-centered, cross-curricular learning. This methodology of collaborative teaching and arts integration is not yet common practice. My hope was to add to the body of research based in student perspectives and to make the study accessible to policy makers and educators.

I believe the most remarkable finding of this study was the awareness and clarity with which students articulated their desire for imagination to be more fully embodied into their education. Students stated they wanted to include that part of themselves in their schooling and felt strongly that their learning would benefit from exercising their imaginations. These students are uttering a clear cry to educators.

My opinion about this study's findings is that key to the classroom teacher's success with the ARIA program was the required ongoing professional development (PD) throughout the school year. The professional development sessions were opportunities for the classroom teacher to witness, attempt and question the opera making process. With those experiences to draw from, classroom teachers had the evidence and the practice they needed to integrate the ARIA curriculum in their classrooms. Noted was the level of trust and reciprocity among the three teachers that I believe took root in PD sessions. Cohesively implemented arts-integrated curriculum incorporates student imagination with a high probability of increasing enjoyment for all parties involved. I observed a classroom teacher and ARIA teaching artists who created an arts enriched classroom where student imagination was demonstrated in their opera. This is the kind of classroom that succinctly reflects my dreams for imagication. As Ting Yi described it in a interview

> Well just, it's just my favorite part about opera is that we're doing it about history and it's really interesting to learn about because some things you don't know about and then you learn it and it's, and it's really interesting to some people.
> . (Interview with Ting Yi, March 3, 2012)

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Student Surveys First Session

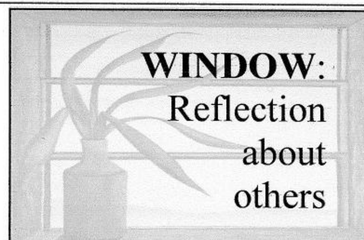
Neighborhood Bridges REFLECTIONS

Date:__________

Please write in complete sentences! **School:** **Classroom #:**______________

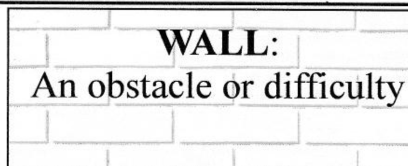
My Score:

3	2	1
Doing my best	Good effort	I could work harder



Class Score:

3	2	1
Doing our best	Good effort	We could work harder



LIGHT BULB:
Ideas for NB improvements

My overall experience was positive:

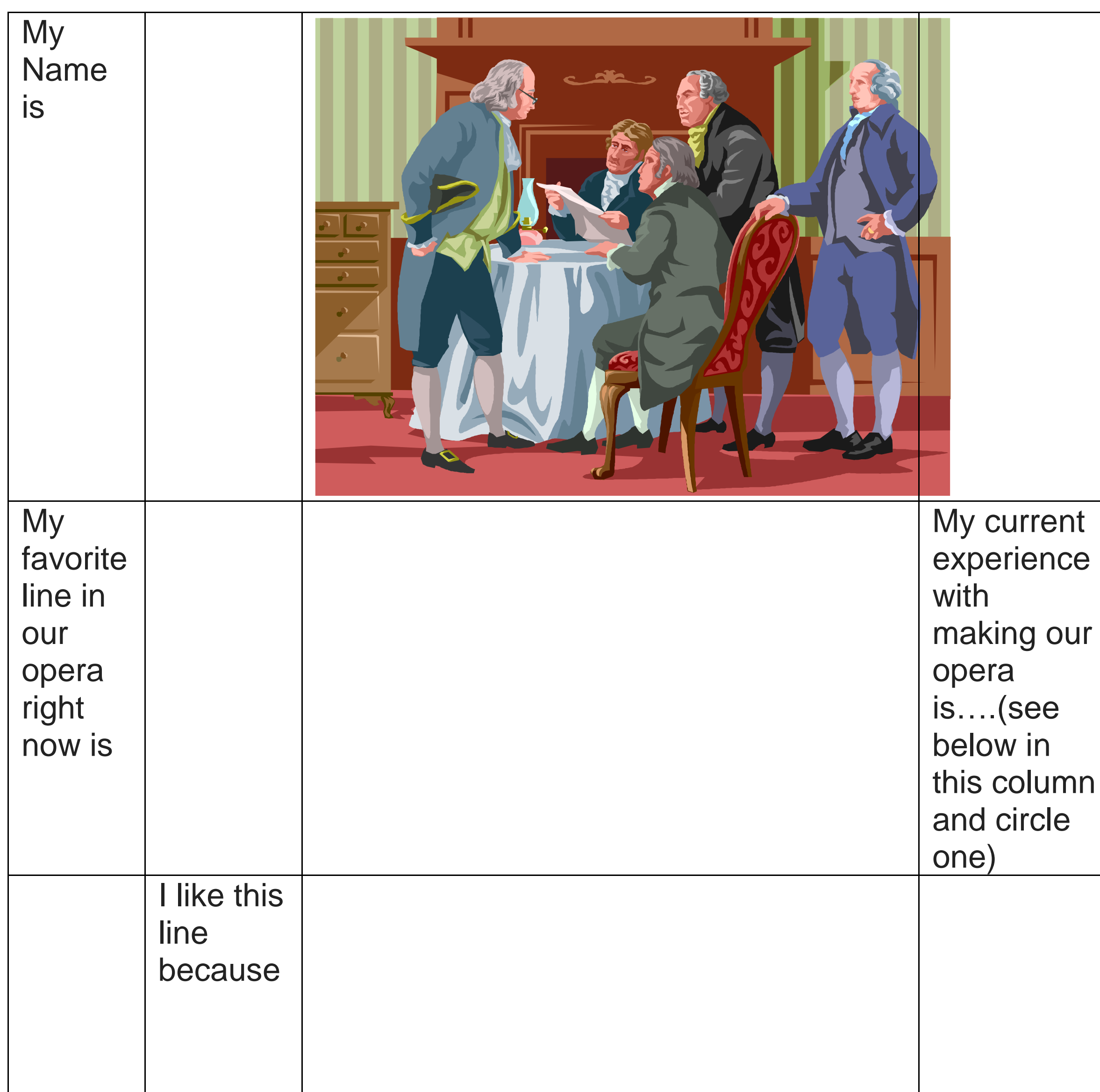
4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	*Agree*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*

Appendix B: Student Surveys Second Session

Student Thoughts	**You and the SFO ARIA Program**	**Circle You!**		
Concept/ Skill	Exemplary	Accomplished	Developing	Beginning
Academic Concept Writing	LOVE IT Writing in sentences, paragraphs with topic sentences, conclusion sentences, using accurate grammar and punctuation	GOOD at this Writing in sentences and paragraphs, accurate grammar and punctuation, wrote my topic and concluding sentences but I may adjust them	GETTING COMFY Writing in sentences, grammar and punctuation need work, paragraphs written but need shape, working on topic and concluding sentences	NOT SURE HOW TO HELP Writing in sentences, grammar a challenge, punctuation a challenge, not sure what a topic sentence is, not sure how to form a paragraph
Opera Concept Creating your Story	LOVE IT I have ideas I have thought through about how to tell our story, I listen for ideas from others, I share my ideas with the class, I write out ideas, I draw my ideas, I journal my thoughts	GOOD at this Thinking, listening, sharing, writing, drawing, but need to work my ideas into the group more	GETTING COMFY Working up to sharing my ideas, thinking about details we could add to the story, planning on drawing some ideas	NOT SURE HOW TO HELP Not sure what the opera could be about, or look like, sound or move like
Vocabulary About anything opera	LOVE IT I use opera words when I talk about our opera, that mean going fast, slow, loud, soft, I include opera words in my writing	GOOD at this Using a few opera words to talk about our opera, I plan on using them in my writing	GETTING COMFY I have a few words I know, but I need to ask and review other words	NOT SURE HOW TO HELP Can't think of any words I have gained from the opera, I'll have to ask others what the words they are using mean
Activity How is that happening?	LOVE IT Writing beginning, middle and end of story, I list characters, setting, their histories, events for the story, placement for music and movement. I can see the whole thing	GOOD at this Writing beginning, middle and end of a story idea, listing characters, setting and	GETTING COMFY Writing moments, but I do not have a whole plot yet, starting to share my ideas,	NOT SURE HOW TO HELP Do not have many ideas about the structure of the story, the characters, who

	in my head. Including set, lighting, props, costumes, music and movement for the show	some events for the story. I am working on character histories and where we need music and movement	starting to offer ideas for other peoples ideas	they are, what they do or when we could sing and move

Interview Second Session
Reflections
Lisa Edsall Giglio

My Name is			
My favorite line in our opera right now is			My current experience with making our opera is….(see below in this column and circle one)
	I like this line because		

I think the next few weeks we need to focus on		The best solution to an opera problem another student came up with recently was	great good just okay not good
And I think we are going to need help with			
	One thing I think could help us is		

Appendix C: Student Surveys Fourth Session

	A Lot	**Some**	**A Little**	**Not So Much**
Construct your own version as a class in small groups and sometimes as the whole class?				
Demonstrate, listen to or speak what you created?				
Work on what makes a good story?				
Read materials like books from that time?				
Make it up in order of events?				
Discuss how people other than our Founding Fathers were feeling about the whole thing?				
Discuss what makes a good citizen? Then or now?				
US Constitution?				
Bill of Rights?				

	A Lot	**Some**	**A Little**	**Not So Much**
What was going on with Religion?				
Something not mentioned that should be?				
Do you use what you experienced in opera in any other subjects?				

Appendix D: Teacher Questions

Classroom Teacher

1. Can you briefly describe your teaching background to date?

2. Can you briefly describe any training you may have in arts education?

3. What does arts education mean to you?

4. What are some of the ways you use arts education in your class other than with the Aria program?

5. With other subject areas how do you know your students are learning ideas or material?

6. How would you describe student learning during the SFO ARIA program?

7. Tell me about the experience of having the SFO ARIA program in your classroom in general.

8. Tell me about a particular experience of an SFO ARIA program activity you used in your classroom.

9. Can you describe an activity in class that you felt helped your students connect their learning about opera to other subject matter?

10. In what ways could we improve the SFO ARIA program?

Teaching Artist

1. Can you briefly describe your teaching background to date?

2. Can you briefly describe your training in arts education?

3. What does arts education mean to you?

4. How would you describe student learning during the SFO ARIA program?

5. Tell me about your experience of working with the SFO ARIA program

6. Can you describe an activity from class that you feel helps your students connect their learning about opera to other subject matter?

7. How do students describe their experience of the working with SFO ARIA program to you?

Appendix E: Student Music

Tea Party/Declaration of Independence

[redacted] 5th Grade-[redacted] Elementary

Text: Created by 5th Grade Students
led by playwright, Erin Bregman

Melodies: Improvised by 5th Grade Students
led by composer, Thomas Conroy
Accompaniment: Thomas Conroy

Moderato, agitato ♩= 88

Voice

Piano

Why did they do that? We

6

don't want tax-es on tea! But you're wast-ing it all! No more tax-es for me!

9

We want free-dom for all peo-ple. I hope this is-n't war. I

12

lost my tea in the Bos - ton Bay and the tax-es are mak-ing us poor.

© 2012 by Thomas Conroy and The San Francisco Opera Education Department

14

Our free - dom is locked in a box.

17

What can we do to get out? I feel so help - less stand - ing here. It makes me want to shout:

20

We want free-dom for all peo-ple. I hope this is-n't war. I

23

lost my tea in the Bos - ton Bay and the tax - es are mak - ing us poor.

Più mosso ♩= 96

25

What if there is war? My worst night-mare will come true. I want to help but the men will say, "What can a wo - man do?" We want free-dom for all peo-ple. I hope this is-n't war. I

28

31

Moderato, agitato ♩= 88

34

37

lost my tea in the Bos-ton Bay and the tax-es are mak-ing us poor. We want free-dom for all peo-ple. I

40

hope this is-n't war. I lost my tea in the Bos - ton Bay and the tax-es are mak-ing us poor.

43

Allegretto, moderato, stern, ♩= 92

46

We

50

We sac-ri-ficed our lives.

fought, we shot, we died! We nursed, we healed, we fed! We sac-ri-ficed our lives. We've

54

all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead.

58

We won. We did it. The red coats have re-treat-ed. We

62

We

cel-e-brate our vic-tor-y. England's been de-feated. We fought, we shot, we died! We nursed, we healed, we fed!

sac-ri-ficed our lives.
66
We sac-ri-ficed our lives. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've
3
3
70
all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead.
3
3
74
Now that you have free-dom, it's time that we get ours. You've
77
pro-ven your-self on the bat-tle field. We've pro-ven we're not cowards. We
3

80
fought, we shot, we died! We nursed, we healed, we fed! We sac-ri-ficed our lives. We

83
sac-ri-ficed our lives. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've

87
all bur-ied our dead. Free-dom is for ev-'ry-one. Not

91
just a se-lec-ted few. We fin-al-ly have re-al-ized that you de-serve it too. We fought, we shot, we died! We

We sac-ri-ficed our lives.

95

nursed, we healed, we fed! We sac-ri-ficed our lives. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've

99

all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead. We've all bur-ied our dead.

Allegretto, celebratory ♩= 90

103

107

Wel - come to the U - nit - ed States of A - mer - i - ca. Where all peo-ple are

111

e - qual, where all peo - ple are free, and it no long - er

115

mat - ters whether - er you are a he or a she.

119

We hold these truths to be self - ev - i - dent:

123

that all peo - ple are e - qual

127

with rights that can - not die,

131

Life, Li - ber - ty, and Hap - pi - ness! Words we can - not de - ny.

136

Wel - come to the U - nit - ed States of A - mer - i - ca. Where

140

all peo - ple are e - qual, where all peo - ple are free, and

144

it no long - er mat - ters ___ wheth - er you are a he or a she.

148

The dove is a sym - bol of peace and

152

love is strong - er than war. Since we have been re - leased from

156

Eng - land's grasp, we're strong - er than be - fore.

160

The

164

states have been u - nit - ed In - de - pen - dence, we de - clared! Now

168

eve - ry - one has free-dom. Free - dom shall be shared.

172

176

Wel - come to the U - nit - ed States of A - mer - i - ca.___ Where all peo - ple are

180

e - qual, where all peo - ple are free, and it no long - er

184

mat - ters___ wheth - er you are a he or a she.

188

Appendix F: School Site Permission

University of San Francisco

August 30, 2011

Mr. XXXXX
Principal, XXXXX Elementary School
XXXXX
San Francisco, CA XXXXX

Dear Principal XXXXX:

My name is Lisa Edsall- Giglio and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education studying International and Multicultural Education at the University of San Francisco. I am doing a study on the students' perspectives of their collaboration with the San Francisco Opera ARIA program at your school. I am interested in exploring their experience of the program. Although there is much research giving us clear data that arts in the curriculum assists in academic success for students, there is still little research from the point of view of the participants' students. Your fifth grade teacher, XXXXX at XXXXX Elementary School, has given approval for me to conduct this research in her classroom.

Your teacher and students are free to decline to answer any questions they do not wish to answer, or to stop participation at any time. Although the school will not be asked to put its name on the interviews, I will know that you were asked to participate in the research because I sent you this letter.

Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.

While there will be no direct benefit to your school from participating in this study, the anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of students' perspectives working in collaboration with the SF Opera ARIA Program.

There will be no costs to your school as a result of taking part in this study, nor will your school be reimbursed for your participation in this study.

If you have questions about the research, you may contact me at 555-5555. If you have further questions about the study, you may contact the IRBPHS at the University of San Francisco, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You school is free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Thank you for your attention.
Sincerely,

Lisa Edsall Giglio
Doctoral Student, School of Education
University of San Francisco

Appendix G: Parent Consent for Pupil Information

PARENT OR GUARDIAN CONSENT
RELEASE OF PUPIL INFORMATION ONLY

Dear Parent:
San Francisco Unified School District does not allow your child to participate in research studies, nor does it release information concerning your child to any non educational organization, agency, or individual, without your written consent.
Lisa Edsall Giglio would like to include information about your child from district files and/or databases in a District approved research study. The study is about student's perceptions of their collaboration with the SF Opera ARIA program. The information gained through this study will be used as data for the completion of a dissertation.
Inclusion of your child's information in the study is strictly voluntary. Agreeing or not agreeing to have your child's information included in the study will not affect your child's school status in any way.
Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.
Please let me know, by checking the appropriate box below, whether or not you wish the school to allow the release of your child's information for this study.
If information is to be released, you may receive a copy of the record or information to be released by submitting a request in writing to this office. If you have any questions regarding the information, we may assist in interpreting it.
Please sign and return the following page of this form to the Office of the Principal as soon as possible.
Sincerely,

_____________________________ _________________________ ______________
Principal School Date

I give my consent for my child____________________________ to participate in the research study being conducted by ______________________________________.

I do not give my consent for my child____________________________ to participate in the research study conducted by____.

______________________________________ __________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature Date s

Appendix H: Parent Consent for Pupil Participation

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM
PUPIL PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Parent:

I am conducting research in your child's school and would like to include your child in my study. My study is about students perceptions of working with the SFO ARIA program in their classroom. The information from the study will be used to add to the body of research regarding student's perceptions of working with the SFO ARIA program to inform best practices in curriculum creation.

Your child's participation in the study will involve being interviewed by the researcher a maximum of four times between October, 2011 and May, 2012. Interviews will happen at school. Group interviews will not exceed 60 minutes; any individual interviews will not exceed 20 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files. Your child's participation in the study is strictly voluntary. Agreeing or not agreeing to have your child included in the study will not affect your child's school status in any way. In addition, your child may withdraw from the study at any time. Please let me know, by checking the appropriate box below, whether or not you wish the school to allow the release of your child's information for this study.

I would like your approval for your child to participate in this study. If you would like to review a copy of the research instruments or have other questions you would like to discuss, please feel free to call me at: ____________.

Sincerely,

Lisa Edsall Giglio

University of San Francisco

Doctoral Student

I give my consent for my child____________________________ to participate in the research study being conducted by ____.

I do not give my consent for my child____________________________ to participate in the research study conducted by____.

_______________________________________ ___________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Appendix I: Principal Permission

August 30, 2011

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
University of San Francisco
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Members of the Committee:

On behalf of XXXXX Elementary School, I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Mrs. Lisa Edsall Giglio, a doctoral student at USF. We are aware that Mrs. Edsall Giglio intends to conduct her research by administering interviews with our students and our employees. Mrs. Edsall – Giglio will also attend classes and keep a daily journal of her experiences here at XXXXX Elementary School. This research will be conducted during the 2011 - 2012 school year.

I am responsible for employee relations and am the Principal of XXXXX Elementary School. I give Mrs. Edsall-Giglio permission to conduct her research at our school.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office at (415) XXX –XXXX.

Sincerely,

XXXXX
Principal of XXXXX Elementary School, SFUSD

Appendix J: Classroom Teacher Permission
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

August 30, 2011

XXXXX
XXXXX Elementary School
XXXXX
San Francisco, CA XXXXX

Dear XXXXX:

My name is Lisa Edsall Giglio and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education, International and Multicultural Department at the University of San Francisco. I am doing a study of fifth graders perceptions of their collaboration with the San Francisco Opera's Education Department's ARIA program. I am interested in the learning about the ways these students believe the ARIA program may impact their learning across curriculum. The San Francisco Unified School District as well as Principal XXXXX of XXXXX Elementary has given approval for me to conduct this research.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are the teacher working directly with a class of fifth grade students. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to give two 20 minute interviews between January and May of 2012.

There is always potential in interviews that a question may make the interviewee feel uncomfortable; please decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and/or to stop participation at any time. Although your real name will not be used in the research, I will know that you were asked to participate in the research because I sent you this letter. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.

While there will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of strategies used with fifth grade students to assist their success in school.

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study, nor will you be reimbursed for your participation in this study.

If you have questions about the research, you may contact me at 415 509 1015. If you have further questions about the study, you may contact the IRBPHS at the University of San Francisco, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling 415 422 6091 and leaving a voicemail message, emailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. San Francisco Unified School District is aware of this study but does not require that you participate in this research and your decision as to whether or not to participate will have no influence on your present or future status as an employee or student in the San Francisco Unified School District

Thank you for you attention.

Sincerely,

Lisa Edsall Giglio
Teaching Artist SF Opera ARIA program
Doctoral Student USF, International and Multicultural Education