

# LEARNING and the Arts: Crossing Boundaries

Proceedings from an invitational meeting  
for education, arts and youth funders held  
January 12–14, 2000, Los Angeles

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# Table of Contents

1

## **Introduction**

Alexandra Christy, Nick Rabkin, Janet Rodriguez, Vicki Rosenberg

## **Arts Education's Place in a Knowledge-Based Global Economy**

Ken Robinson

7

## **Ten Lessons the Arts Teach**

Elliot Eisner

## **Seeing Our Way into Learning**

Shirley Brice Heath

15

18

## **Arts Learning Experiences**

## **Practitioners on Effective Partnerships**

Bonnie Pittman, Russ Chapman, Elisa Crystal,  
Mary Sue Sweeney Price

24

27

## **Reframing Arts in Education**

Rudy Crew

## **Researchers' Perspectives on Emerging Best Practices**

Dick Deasy, James Catterall, Sandy Rieder, Steve Seidel

29

31

## **Small Group Discussions: Reflections and Next Steps**

32

## **Closing Remarks**

Ken Robinson

# Learning and the Arts: Crossing Boundaries

## Introduction

Every now and again funders have the privilege of attending a meeting that redirects thinking and compels action.

Such a meeting took place on January 12-14, 2000 in Los Angeles, when 120 people assembled for *Learning and the Arts: Crossing Boundaries*. Representing some 50 foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education, these program officers, CEOs and trustees came together to look at the arts' potential for improving the lives of America's children. The group included leading arts, education and youth funders eager to think, talk and plan across traditional programmatic boundaries.

The impetus for the meeting was the extraordinary moment of opportunity that did not exist even a few years ago. Worldwide, every post-industrialized nation is considering major reforms in education, and with these changes are opening real opportunities for the arts to make distinctive contributions to learning and development. Qualitative new practice in arts education is trickling into our schools—practice that not only opens the world of the arts to children, but also opens the world to children through the arts. And it does so at a time when research is showing substantial cognitive, social and emotional benefits to kids who participate deeply in the arts, regardless of socioeconomic status.

These are the proceedings of that meeting, requested by those who attended, by those invited who could not attend and by many others who have heard about the meeting and want to know more about it.

Why has *Learning and the Arts* sparked such interest? Why did the Gund, Packard, Rhode Island and Surdna Foundations so eagerly contribute funds to publish these proceedings? Why, since January, has the Rhode Island Foundation refocused the guidelines of a new initiative in arts education? Why has the Skillman Foundation resolved to place a much higher priority on participation in the arts, rather than simply on exposure to the arts for youth?

Those of us who planned the meeting over a two-year period suspect a few reasons.

First, despite growing evidence that the arts can make significant contributions to children's learning and development, arts education too often falls through the cracks between education and arts funding in foundations. Arts education is often considered peripheral in education policy and is reduced to education *about* the arts in cultural organizations. *Learning and the Arts* faced these problems head-on, and in these edited transcriptions are found promising ideas for possible solutions.

**New practice in arts education not only opens the world of the arts to children, it opens the world to children through the arts. —Nick Rabkin**

Second, people resonate with the effort the meeting, whose subtitle was *Crossing Boundaries*, made to break out of traditional funding patterns. Many foundations sent two or more program officers to insure a cross-fertilization of ideas when back at their organizations, and presentations were planned with the blended perspectives of arts, education and youth funders in mind.

Third, people understand that a record of new thinking, produced by innovative minds in education, youth development and the arts, could have a lasting impact on work we need to do *within* our foundations *and* nationally.

**Too often teachers are employed to teach the curriculum, not to teach children.**

—*Ken Robinson*

So we invite you in, either to revisit those three days or experience them for the first

time. Join keynote speaker Ken Robinson, Professor of Arts and Education at the University of Warwick in England, as he lays out how the habits of mind cultivated effectively by the arts — creativity, innovation, critical, synthetic and systemic thinking—hold the key to meeting the needs of the 21st century’s new economy.

Reflect with Elliot Eisner, Lee Jacks Professor of Education & Professor of Art at Stanford University’s School of Education, as he unveils ten competencies that the arts develop.

Venture with linguistic anthropologist Shirley Brice Heath, Professor of Linguistics and English at Stanford, into the complicated world of neurobiological research—research that strongly suggests that deep engagement in the arts has significant consequences for brain development. And along with this challenging research, Heath sets forth compelling arguments for how effective arts education programs in after-school settings can result in important gains in students’ cognitive, social and emotional development.

Then shift, as the group did, from the left side of your brain to the right, and imagine what it was like for those 120 funders to spend the next two hours *making art*. The *Arts Learning Experiences*, led by master teaching artists and art educators in the performing, visual and literary arts, made clear that if we are truly to understand the power and significance of the arts in education, then there is no lecture, research study or university professor that can replace what one experiences while *making art*.

In a group debriefing and discussion, Robinson, Eisner, Heath and the teaching artists discussed the kinds of learning that took place in these sessions—authentic learning that found the participants full of pride and a sense of accomplishment by sessions’ end. And what most of us took away from that discussion, as we hope you will from the summary, is the responsibility funders have toward making sure that it is these kinds of arts experiences that we support in and outside of schools.

We hope you will continue on to read about the session entitled *Case Studies: Practitioners on Effective Partnerships*. In this session, an elementary school principal and directors of a museum and a community cultural center discuss elements of effective partnerships, ones that offer ideas for moving authentic, arts-rich learning forward. The session ends with several strong suggestions for funders to pursue.

For a sobering view, struggle, as Rudy Crew did in his role as New York City School Chancellor, with getting the arts back into schools. He reflects Eisner and Robinson when he urges that education be about developing the whole child—academic, social

and personal. Crew argues that growth on all three fronts should be the goals of education, and the arts are at the crossroads of these three goals.

And finally, delve with three of the nation's leading education researchers into current data demonstrating the rich cognitive and affective benefits that the arts provide to our students.

It is our hope that these proceedings will stoke the fires lit at the meeting and help fulfill the promise of *Learning and the Arts*—the promise that funders, working together and across the boundaries of program areas and institutions, will find new ways to help our nation's children have the best educational and developmental opportunities possible, opportunities that include the arts.

The work goes on. A smaller group of funders spent an additional day together in May 2000 to consider how *Learning and the Arts* might take shape as a multifunder, multidisciplinary initiative. From that meeting, an expanded leadership team emerged that includes leading funders in education and youth development, as well as the arts.

This team is currently considering opportunities for action, particularly in the areas of research, advocacy and field building. We work hoping that this promising road might lead us to the kind of grantmaking that ultimately redefines how children learn.

**Alexandra Christy, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation**

**Nick Rabkin, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation**

**Janet Rodriguez, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation**

**Vicki Rosenberg, J. Paul Getty Trust**

Planning Committee, *Learning and the Arts: Crossing Boundaries*  
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# Arts Education's Place in a Knowledge-Based Global Economy

**Ken Robinson**

*Professor of Arts Education*

*University of Warwick*

I don't know who your heroes are, but Paul McCartney is one of mine. About a year ago I got to meet him over lunch to talk about the future of the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts. Paul is its patron, and I'm its chief examiner. It's his old school. I told him I was from Liverpool too, and he asked me what school I went to. I said I went to the Collegiate, because I did, which was a selective grammar. And he said, "Oh, I wanted to go there." And I said, "Why didn't you?" and he said, "I wasn't good enough." I said, "Well, come on Paul, it worked out. Let it go, forget the school."

The point is that people don't. It amazes me how many successful adults carry with them some idea that they're not really very clever. What is it that we're

**We cannot fulfill our current economic objective by just doing better what we used to do; we have to educate differently.**

doing to kids at school which makes so many people leave believing they're not very good? Or being demoralized by the whole experience? And, is this justifiable? This is the seat of my interest in the arts.

In most education systems throughout the world, the arts are at the margins. They're optional, low status and not in the center of education provision. That's been the case now for the last 150 years. It's true in your system, it's true throughout Europe and in Asia.

Now, education worldwide is undergoing a revolution. That's not too strong a word; it's a complete revolution. The arts

need to be at the center of the new forms of education that are emerging. Private foundations have absolutely pivotal roles in achieving the shift that's required in realigning the arts to the center of education. They can leverage the kind of innovation that's needed. But to do that you have to tackle three questions.

The first is, *What are the arts?* You can have very interesting and amicable conversations with people about the arts all day, providing you don't say what you're talking about.

The second is, *What are the arts for in education?* The phrase the creative arts is a misconception. The arts are not always creative, and they don't need to be, and other areas of education can be equally creative if properly taught. These conceptions separate the arts from other parts of the curriculum where they should be naturally joined up. That's why crossing boundaries is such a good theme for this meeting.

The third issue is provision. *What kind of experiences do people need to benefit from the arts properly?* One of the problems in most of our school systems is that children do not have the kind of arts experiences they need to feel the positive benefits from them. So definition, function and provision are key questions.

For the last year I have been leading a national inquiry for the government of the United Kingdom, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE). When Tony Blair was elected prime minister in 1997, he said he had three priorities, "education,

education, education.” All countries are having to reposition themselves economically, culturally and socially, and education is the key to that process. There isn’t a country in the world that isn’t reforming its education system and talking about raising standards. Tony Blair also talks about raising standards. The problem is that he, like most political leaders, means academic standards in particular. They confuse academic work in particular with education in general. Their more specific interest is in literacy and numeracy. These are important but not enough.

Our education systems have been built on the economic model of industrialism. The industrial economy required a workforce that was 80% manual and 20% professional. Most of our education systems were designed to pick out this 20% of kids and give them privileged access to certain sorts of occupations. That model is changing irrevocably. We no longer live essentially in an industrial economy, and the work force we need now has a new pattern. We cannot fulfill our current economic objective by just doing better what we used to do; we have to educate differently.

Academic standards are very important but they’re very particular. Academic ability is not the whole of your intelligence. If the human mind was restricted to academic intelligence, most of human culture would never have happened. There would be no paintings, there would be no music, no love, no intuition; there would be no dance, no feelings, no architecture, no design, nothing. I think these are rather large factors to leave out of a model of human intelligence.

The arts have been at the margins of education because they have not been seen as useful in getting jobs. This is partly because the practice of the arts does not conform to the dominant idea of academic intelligence. There’s a very interesting contrast in this respect in universities, which

are the apotheosis of the academic system. If you’re a chemist in a university science department doing research, you do chemistry. If you’re in an art department at a university, you don’t paint; you write about painting. The reason is that our dominant model of education doesn’t recognize that the arts are essentially ways of knowing. Research is defined as a systematic inquiry for *new knowledge*. Yet, really, music, poetry, dance and painting are ways of knowing things that we couldn’t know in any other way. There are ideas, feelings and sensations that can only be understood in these ways.

The arts are ways of understanding.

The NACCCE committee brings together artists, scientists, business people and educators. One member of my committee is Professor Harry Kroto. He won the Nobel Prize for chemistry three years ago. Harry is a professional designer as well as a distinguished scientist. I asked him, “What is different between the creative process of the arts and the sciences?” He said there was no difference; that in both cases, it’s a dialogue between speculation and tradition. He said, “The outcome is different but the process is the same.”

Another NACCCE member is Sir Simon Rattle, director of the Berlin Philharmonic. Sir Simon and I were discussing the similarities between mathematics and music, both forms of representation. If you don’t read music well and come across a new musical score, you see a puzzle rather than hear the symphony. People who don’t speak mathematics can find it an equally perplexing puzzle; they see numbers rather than elegant solutions.

We owe it to children to give them access to all of these different modes of understanding. Without them they never engage with the real heart of themselves.

**Education has to say to [children], “what can you do?” rather than, “can you do this?”**

We're creating a world of such immense complexity now that children need many ways of engaging in order to experience it fully. Education has to say to them, "what can you do?" rather than, "can you do this?"

**These three, curriculum, training and partnership, are pivotal to moving forward this agenda of getting arts from the margins to the center.**

equally important. But all of our systems perpetuate a hierarchy of ability in which the arts are at the bottom.

The second is the **training** of professional teachers and others. Teaching the arts is an expert job. It is not easy. A great disservice has been done to the arts over the years with the general idea of free expression, that all we have to do with children to get them to benefit from the arts is let them loose. It isn't true. To benefit from the arts children need to be immersed in the disciplines and practices of the arts. There's a delicate balance between learning skills and having the freedom to innovate and speculate. Most of our teachers and most of our artists are not trained to do this.

The third is **partnerships**. Schools should no longer be sole traders in education. There are thousands of organizations—businesses, cultural organizations of every sort—that want to be and should be partners in education.

These three, curriculum, training and partnership, are pivotal to moving forward this agenda of getting arts from the margins to the center. We have to recognize synergies, not separateness, between science and art, mathematics

In order to move arts to the center of education, we need to address three issues. The first is the **curriculum**. I know of no argument that can be sustained that mathematics is more important than music or that science is more important than arts and humanities. These are

and music. We have to recognize synergies between what goes on in schools and what goes on outside of schools. This is a job of melding different areas of children's experiences.

Private foundations can do a huge amount by setting up pilot projects, which provide evidence of success, by generating new models of practice and by advocacy. There is a genuine revolution happening out there. It isn't that we need to consolidate the old system; we need to renew and reconstruct it. That's a job for innovation, adventure and creativity, and your organizations could be at the very heart of that adventure.

Education is the key to the future. The arts are part of the combination. But a key can turn two ways. Our leaders keep talking about human resources and the need to unleash them. Education will do that but if you turn this key the wrong way, you lock people in. I think we've done that systematically for years.

The real trick is to turn the key a different way so that we unlock people's potential. That means developing a system of education which is mapped onto a conception of human capacity rather than on some traditional model of academic and nonacademic substitutes. That's where we should start. Too often teachers are employed to teach the curriculum, not to teach children. To teach children we need to start with a view of what their natural capacities are. That isn't just a question for the arts; it's for the arts in combination with science and humanities and physical education and the rest.

Turning that key is the real challenge we face. It's a challenge that can only be met collaboratively and can only be met essentially as this conference has done — by crossing boundaries. Thank you.



# Ten Lessons the Arts Teach

**Elliot Eisner**

*Lee Jacks Professor of Education  
Stanford University*

The organizers of this meeting have assigned me a particular topic. I have been asked to “discuss the intellectual, creative and developmental skills students can gain from learning in and through the arts, the arts in general education and the current reform movement.”

First, work in the arts teaches children to pay attention to qualitative relationships; attention to such relationships is critical for creating a coherent and satisfying piece of work. How qualities interact, whether in sight or sound, whether through prose or poetry, whether in the choreographed movement we call dance or in an actor’s lines and gestures—these relationships matter. They cannot be neglected, they are the means through which the work becomes expressive.

One of the most interesting and educationally important features about working with qualitative relationships is that deciding how they should be composed depends upon somatic experience, that sense, as Nelson Goodman (1978) called it, “of rightness of fit.” Is this the right word to use here? Does this passage in the painting work? Does this section need a smoother transition? Is this color too raw? Questions like these, which are crucial in the arts, cannot be answered by appealing to formula; their answers must be found by appealing to what can be felt.

Now reliance on somatic experience to know that something fits is not limited to the arts. To the extent to which the actual practice of *doing* science is an art, it too requires that judgments about the rightness of an idea or theory be

determined, at least in part, by somatic experience. In the arts—and when fields of study and practices are treated as arts—the somatic experience of relationships is a central basis for making judgments.

What is striking is that so little in the school curriculum affords children the opportunity to make such judgments. The school curriculum is heavily weighted towards subject matter that gives students the illusion that rightness means correctness and that getting things right always depends upon fealty to rule; spelling, arithmetic, writing as they are usually taught are largely mimetic or rule abiding. Not so the arts. The arts are most conspicuous in their insistence that relationships are central and that good relationships are achieved when the mind works in the service of feeling. As Israel Scheffler (1977)

says, what we have in the arts is a cognitive use of the emotions. In this domain it is judgment rather than rule that prevails.

Second, the arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer. If they do anything, the arts embrace diversity of outcome. Standardization of solution and uniformity of response is no virtue in the arts. While the teacher of spelling is not particularly interested in promoting the

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student's ingenuity, the arts teacher seeks it.

Third, the arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world. This too is a lesson that is seldom taught in our schools. The multiple-choice objective test is an encomium to the single correct answer. That's what makes the test "objective." It is not objective because of the way the test items were selected; it is objective because of the way they are scored. It makes no allowance in scoring for the scorer to exercise judgment, that's why machines can do it. Reflect for a moment on the covert lessons such tests teach students.

When there are multiple ways of addressing a problem, a child's individual signature can be affixed to the work. It also enables the child to say, "Here I am. This is how I see it."

It is ironic that at a time when educational reform pushes more and more towards standardized assessment, uniformity of program and homogeneity of

aims, a field that provides balance to such priorities should be regarded as marginal.

From my perspective the greater the pressure on schools to standardize, the greater the

need for the arts, those places where individuality and productive surprise are celebrated.

Fourth, the arts teach children that purposes in complex forms of problem solving are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity. In so-called rational approaches to problem-solving, the standard paradigm holds that goals and objectives must be clear and that once clear, means can be designed to attain those goals. Once means are implemented, evaluation pro-

cedures can be used to determine if the goals and objectives have been reached. If they have not, new and more effective means can be used to recycle the process. It's all very tidy. It's all very spic and span. Action is thought to follow purpose, and while means may vary, objectives do not.

The problem with this model is that this is not the way life works; and it's certainly not the way work in the arts proceeds. Purposes, as James March

(1972) reminds us, evolve, they grow out of action, action does not always follow purpose. Learning in the arts requires the ability and willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds. At its best, work in the arts is not a monologue delivered by the artist to the work, but a dialogue. It is a conversation with materials, a conversation punctuated with all of the surprises and uncertainty that really stimulating conversation makes possible. In the arts one looks for surprise, surprise that redefines goals; purposes are held flexibly. The aim is more than impressing into a material what you already know, but discovering what you don't.

Fifth, the arts teach children that despite the cultural bias that assigns to literal language and number a virtual monopoly on how understanding is advanced, the arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor number exhaust what we can know. Put simply, the limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition. As Michael Polanyi (1966) says, we know more than we can tell.

The reduction of knowing to the quantifiable and the literal is, in my

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view, too high a price to pay for defining the conditions of knowledge. What we come to know through literature, poetry and the arts is not reducible to the literal. Why else would we read Charles Dickens, Elie Weisel, Arthur Miller, Tennyson or Emily Dickinson? Their work helps us walk in someone else's shoes.

But empathic participation in the lives of others is not the only way the arts enlarge understanding. The arts help us share the distinctive qualities of experience that a work of art itself makes possible.

The delicate contours of a Tang dynasty vessel, the power of a Colima effigy, the complex harmonies of a late Beethoven quartet can be experienced whether you live in London, Beijing or

Los Angeles, as long as you know how to inquire into them.

Learning how to conduct such inquiries is part of what it means to have an arts education. I would go so far as to say that if the arts are thought of as carriers of

meaning, and if the concept of literacy is extended to mean the ability to express and recover meaning within the cultural forms in which meaning can appear, then an education in the arts is one way to expand our literacy.

Sixth, the arts teach students that small differences can have large effects. The arts traffic in subtleties. Paying attention to subtleties is not typically a dominant mode of perception in the ordinary course of our lives. We typically see in order to recognize rather than to explore the nuances of a visual field; how many of us here have really seen the façade of our own house? I suspect few. One test is to try to draw it. We tend to look *at* our house or *for* our

house in order to know if we have arrived home, or to decide if it needs to be painted, or to determine if anyone's there. Seeing its visual qualities and their relationships is much less common.

Yet learning to see and hear is precisely what the arts teach; they teach children the art, not only of looking, but also of seeing, not only of listening, but also of hearing. They invite students to explore the auditory contours of a musical performance, the movements of a modern dance, the proportions of an architectural form so that they can be experienced as art forms. Seeing in such situations is slowed down and put in the service of feeling.

But if you think my interests are limited to the fine arts, let me assure you that I have no appetite to limit the scope of aesthetic experience to the fine arts. Reflections on the wet pavement of city streets, cloud formations, billboard posters ripped from the walls of a building and displaying the luscious surface of a collage are also candidates for the kind of seeing I am talking about. There is, however, a difference between such forms and what we think of as works of art. Works of art participate in a tradition, they are invested with intention by their creators, they are a part of a social context, and they have been influenced by their history. Understanding such conditions matter. After all, anything seen can be seen from a purely formal perspective, from garbage cans to snowflakes. The perception of works of art, and I include the arts of popular culture as well, require more.

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Seventh, the arts teach students to

**The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor number exhaust what we can know.**

think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which images become real. In music it is patterned sound; in dance it is the expressive movement of a dancer in motion; in the visual arts it is visual form on a canvas, a block of granite, a sheet of steel or aluminum; in theater it's a complex of speech, movement and set. Each of these art forms uses materials that impose upon those using them a certain set of constraints. They make certain demands. They also provide an array of affordances.

Materials offer distinctive opportunities. To realize such opportunities, the child must be able to convert a material into a medium. For this to occur, the child must learn to think within the affordances and constraints of a material and to employ techniques to make the conversion of a material into a medium possible. A material is not the same as a medium or vice versa. Material is the stuff you work with. A medium is something that mediates. What does something mediate? It mediates the choices, decisions,

ideas and images that the individual has. The problem for the child is to take some material—drawings, paintings, sculptures—and think within the constraints and affordances of that material the shape that that image needs to take. For example, if you give a youngster

a ball of plasticine clay and ask him to sculpt a tree, you'll get one kind of an image. If you ask him to draw a tree, you'll get another kind of image. What the youngster is doing is working with the structural equivalents of the idea of tree within the constraints and the

affordances of the material—a sophisticated form of thinking.

This conversion process occurs not only within the material; it also occurs within the child for it is through the work of art that we make ourselves. The “work of art” is what one does when engaged in an activity in which the end view is something aesthetic. Thus the phrase “work of art” refers to both the task of making art and the result of such work. It is both a noun and a verb. It is activity whose consequences live not only in the object but also in the maker. The work of art is both a product and a means through which we make ourselves.

The arts are about recreation, the emphasis on “re-creation.” What is being re-created? Oneself. One of the great aims of education is to make it possible for people to be engaged in the process of creating themselves. Artists and scientists are alike in this respect. The inventive ones are troublemakers. The trouble that they make is for themselves because what they do is generate problems. The generation of those problems creates disequilibrium in their homeostatic system, which is a motivating force in trying to resolve that problem. In that process of resolution, the individual gets redefined by the qualities, ideas and skills that he or she develops in trying to cope with those problems. With the arts, we have a set of activities that deal with the problem of trying to create qualitative relationships that satisfy some image of aesthetic virtue as the youngster sees it.

How does the remarking of ourselves occur? First, works of art often de-familiarize aspects of the world by

**“One of the great aims of education is to make it possible for people to be engaged in the process of creating themselves.”**

**“Each of the art forms uses materials that impose upon those using them a certain set of constraints. They make certain demands.”**

recontextualization. Marcel Duchamp's urinal entitled *The Fountain* and placed in a museum, represents an invitation to see, in a new way and, in the process, calls attention not only to the work itself but to what counts as art.

A second source of remaking is that works of art focus attention on what would normally go unseen. When the arts are well taught they can reframe the student's perception of the world.

This reframing can take place from the "lessons" that the works of others teach, as well as through the students' efforts to reframe them on their own. The arts provide permission for such reframing. Although new theories in science also represent a reframing, in science we usually expect some correspondence between a scientific representation and what we refer to as reality. In the arts the scope for a "no holds barred" imaginative reframing is not constrained by such expectations.

An eighth lesson the arts teach has to do with the nature of discourse about art. Talk about the arts makes some special demands on those who speak about them. Think, for a moment, about what is required to describe the qualities of a jazz saxophone solo by John Coltrane, the surface of a painting by Helen Frankenthaler or the expressive character of a bronze sculpture by Barbara Hepworth. The task is not to replicate in language the qualities these works possess because clearly no such replication is possible. It is rather to imply through language qualities that are themselves ineffable, hence the trick is to say what cannot be said. It is here that innuendo and connotation are among our strongest allies. It is here that that most powerful of linguistic capacities, metaphor, comes to the rescue. Using metaphor, Suzanne Langer (1952) reminds us, is a way of saying something one way and expecting to be understood in another. Metaphor

adumbrates, it does not translate.

When children are given the opportunity to describe, discuss and interpret what they see, when they are invited to disclose what a work helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job. This is a job that is well known to them for it emerges in the neologisms of toddler talk and it appears in the vernacular poetry we call slang. Criticism in the arts is not only a way to describe what you have seen, it is also a road to sight. The critical act, the task of trying to articulate what is before us, is also a way of discovering what is there.

Ninth, the arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other sources and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.

Consider the experience we undergo in the presence of a truly great piece of architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright's *Falling Water*, for example, or music such as Beethoven's "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. Some works of art have the capacity to put us into another world. So stirring is the journey that we surrender to where the work takes us.

I am fully aware that such experiences are not the common stock-in-trade of the average eight-year-old. As one of my former painting teachers once told me, great works of art require great audiences. Eight-year-olds typically are not yet great audiences, but we wish to help them be. We wish to help them

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learn how to read—and create—such images. In short, we want to help them acquire the forms of literacy that will give them access to such work and to the joy, delight and insight they make possible. If this is elitism then we should try to expand the elite.

I have been describing what the arts teach by identifying some of the cognitive processes they require, but I have been describing these processes as if they functioned independently. They do not. They interact. What this means, for example, is that attention to nuance must be addressed at the same time one is attending to matters of composition, that purposes must be treated flexibly while one is attending to matters of technique, that thought in language and thought in image function simultaneously. Far from being simple, the creation of an image, whether visual, musical, choreographic or dramatic, is a complex form of human achievement in which everything affects everything else.

Such educational achievements have deep importance and they take time. We are all too eager to attain educational ends that might not really matter. The national preoccupation with “world-classness” in this or that subject “by the year 2000” typically pushes us toward short-term goals, not lasting effects. We are too eager to settle for attention to symptoms and to problematic proxies for quality education.

**The lessons that the arts teach require time, attention and skilled teachers . . .**

We need to learn how to take a longer-term view and to be held accountable for more than the merely measurable. The lessons that the arts teach require time, attention and skilled teachers who know what they are after.

We are after much more than what can be displayed on the refrigerator door. When that image dominates the

public’s conception of what the arts are for, the arts will remain marginal, and when that image dominates the teaching of the arts, they should remain marginal.

A tenth lesson the arts teach, and the last one I will describe, pertains to matters of value. The position of the arts in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important. The values the young internalize are seldom internalized by admonition; they permeate the environment and seep in slowly like water through the sand. Values are conveyed through the forms

of life in which they participate. For children these forms of life are made palpable by the value choices that the adults around them make. Among the most important of these choices is what schools should

**“The position of the arts in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.”**

teach. The curriculum of the school shapes children’s thinking. It is a mind-altering device; it symbolizes what adults believe is important for the young to know, what is important to be good at. It tells the young which human aptitudes are important to possess. It gives or denies children opportunities to learn how to think in certain ways.

Since children are compelled by law to spend the major portion of their childhood in school, the *modus vivendi* of the school, and especially the course they must run and the criteria used to determine who among them is the swiftest, matters a great deal. Curriculum decisions, therefore, about content inclusion, content exclusion and content marginalization help shape the forms of life that constitute school. The school socializes in such powerful and ubiquitous ways that how it does so is hardly noticed.

The value of a subject of study is not only a function of its presence in the

curriculum; it is also a function of the amount of time the school devotes to it. Indeed, the most telling index of the importance of a field of study is not found in school district testimonies, but in the amount of time it receives and when it is taught in the school day and week. Add to these considerations the relationship between what is tested and what is regarded as important and you have a recipe for defining what counts in school.

I want to make it clear that in pointing out the virtual absence of testing in the arts, I am not advocating that students be tested in the arts. I do, of course, advocate that teachers evaluate the student's work, their curriculum and their own teaching so that the programs they provide can be strengthened, but that is another matter.

The point here is that as a result of a collection of decisions, the general message conveyed to students regarding the arts is that they are marginal to the school's central purposes. That is a message that needs to be changed. Bringing about that change will require both educational and political initiatives. Educational initiatives enable those who shape curriculum decisions to secure a deeper understanding of what the arts teach, and political ones bring to bear on those same individuals a collective pressure to provide the young with opportunities to have meaningful access to the arts.

In my comments to you I described ten lessons the arts teach. These lessons pertained to the kind of thinking the arts promote. Far from the ornamental functions usually assigned to them, the arts practice and develop modes of thought that are most complex and subtle. The ability to make choices about relationships in the absence of rule, attention to nuance, the ability to exploit the unexpected, learning how to

deal effectively with tasks that have multiple solutions, finding words that say what words cannot say — these are some of the lessons I have described.

If I were to summarize these contributions in three simple terms, I would say that the arts contribute to the growth of mind, meaning and experience. They contribute to the growth of mind for all the reasons I described. They afford the young opportunities to learn how to think in particular ways, ways that may be closer to the tasks of the life they will lead than what they normally encounter in school.

The arts contribute to the growth of meaning because they teach the young how to access meanings that elude the impress of the literal. The arts are appealed to at marriages, courtships, religious rites and funerals. We use them in our most tender moments to express what transcends ordinary language. We also use them to walk in someone else's shoes. They help us understand what theory cannot explain.

The arts contribute to the growth of experience because they remind us of how it feels to be alive, to be moved by what others or we have made. The arts, for all of their instrumental value, are, in the end, about learning how to be touched. They are about the enrichment of life.

Happily our nation is seeing a growing interest in the arts and what they can do for the young. Happily you are here to help that interest grow and to help make our children its beneficiaries. As someone who has been working at this task for over three decades, I'm very glad to have you aboard.

**To summarize . . .  
the arts contribute to  
the growth of mind,  
meaning and  
experience.**

# Ten Lessons the Arts Teach

Elliot Eisner

**1** The arts teach children to make good judgments about qualitative relationships.

Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail.

**2** The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer.

**3** The arts celebrate multiple perspectives.

One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.

**4** The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity. Learning in the arts requires the ability and a willingness to surrender to the unanticipated possibilities of the work as it unfolds.

**5** The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor number exhaust what we can know. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition.

**6** The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects. The arts traffic in subtleties.

**7** The arts teach students to think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which images become real.

**8** The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said.

When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job.

**9** The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.

**10** The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important.



# Seeing Our Way into Learning

**Shirley Brice Heath**

*Professor of Linguistics and English  
Stanford University*

Crossing boundaries becomes an ordinary part of the process of inquiry when scholars of human development attempt to explain learning—especially if they attempt to tie particular kinds of learning with specific contexts. What follows here is a brief story of my crossing over from my usual disciplines—linguistics and anthropology—into neurobiology and cognitive science in order to understand just how linguistic development might be influenced by intensive work in the arts.

By now the story of my search for learning environments of the nonschool hours that attract young people often unreached by academic opportunities is familiar to members of the arts world. Notable about this research is the fact that of the kinds of organizations I found, those that centered in the arts, particularly theatre, visual arts and dance, were particular draws for those young people whose lives were marked by critical high risk factors such as violent schools and unstable economic support for their families. In youth organizations that pull them into heavy participation both as artists and as real players in the organization's life and structure, these young people reflect certain positive cognitive, social and linguistic features at significant levels in comparison with youth in a national sample of students. [These findings are summarized in the 1998 *Monograph of Americans for the Arts* and in *ArtShow: Youth and Community Development*, 1999, available from Partners for Livable Communities, [www.livable.com](http://www.livable.com).]

These young people, in planning, creating and critiquing their joint work, gain extensive practice in hearing and producing the highly complex language of planning they need for scientific reasoning and strategy building. Gaining this kind of language in later development takes considerable practice as speaker and opportunity as listener. For example, in the exemplary youth organizations where young people participate at least ten hours per week, they quickly pick up on the importance of thinking hypothetically (“what if...?” “how about...?” or “if a, b or c, then d and q...”). They also gain extensive practice in producing extended pieces of text, oral and written, in large part through carrying out the numerous roles they play within their organizations—as members of budget, building, fundraising and management committees. Specific arts performances or exhibitions involve them in further roles, as they plan advertising and marketing, order food and beverages and develop detailed lists of props and equipment needed for shows that travel. The initiative and incentive to carry out these tasks come from group pressure that stresses the highest level of achievement possible. Motivation and emotional engagement intensify learning.

Intensive ongoing work in the arts provides extensive modeling and practicing the same kind of language and strategy-building as the highest levels of academic achievement. Because community organizations involve young people of different age groupings, mod-

els of this kind of talking and thinking come not only from adults, but also from older youth.

A sizable proportion of hypothetical language comes in the context of seeing and looking closely, focusing on visual details—that color, that line, that movement in dance, that gesture in a dramatic scene. To talk about these details requires pinpointing, focusing quite literally, holding attention and drawing on metaphor. All of these are in the service of explaining what is held in close focused attention, while identifying a problem and posing possible solutions.

The simultaneity of visual focus and verbal explication has in the past decade become an area of study for neurobiologists using positron emission tomography, better known as PET scanning, to study brain activity during these co-occurrences. Such work does not, by any means, provide a cause-and-effect answer to any questions we may have about learning, but this research has raised four points of keen interest to linguists who study learning in the context of specific actions, such as sustained eye focus for attention to detail.

1) Selective attention to an object feature, such as color, results in increased activity in regions that mediate perception—or interpretation—of that feature. Naming of these features further engages brain regions that mediate perception, particularly with respect to those regions associated with retrieval of previously acquired information about that feature. Research of neurobiologists and neurophysicists indicates how focused attention on visual details and features—so critical to talk about the arts—draws in parallel ways on higher-level functions such as memory, retrieved information and meaning generation.

2) The talk that is generated within arts work then depends on correlations

in different domains (form, depth, color) and grouping or linking multiple features into unitary clusters that derive in large part from perception or meaning making. Thus when features are discerned and centered on through visual focus, what happens amounts to mapping in which the image schemata structure calls on perceptual interactions, bodily experiences and cognitive operations in parallel. In brain research, this is often called the “binding problem” — how do we put the sense together with the naming with relevant memory? Coming to be conscious of art depends on reciprocity of connections whereby peripheral topographic areas of the sensory brain act as an internal sketchpad in a cyclic process of controlling and observing that amount to reflecting. This is a creative loop in which we are constantly bootstrapping what is called for by a focus on the sensory onto our memory of images, knowledge of symbols and links to symbolic transactions.

3) The third feature of what happens in the focusing of attention and talk and gesturing in the arts is demand for analogical reasoning. We now know much more than we did even five years ago about what it is that constitutes such reasoning. Three critical components have been isolated:

- a) identifying important attributes and ignoring irrelevant information
- b) inferring relationships among components and using a description of the new problem to retrieve from memory an earlier problem it resembles
- c) then deciding how well the solution to the old problem applies to the current problem.

To accomplish such reasoning, cognitive strategies of all types are called on. Handling these for abstract concepts depends on having experience in visual attention. Both measures of sustained visual attention and demonstra-

tion of abilities to remember *a priori* experience and link components of this experience to the one at hand are now among the first “measures” or indicators of intelligence prediction in very young infants.

4) What must happen for one to be an artist is development of the self-discipline necessary to make focus of attention possible. Normal vision does not take in all details but instead selects and categorizes those that seem to make a critical difference. Art demands intense focus to determine just which details do make these differences and the effects that might result through changes in shape, alignment, proportion or placement of details.

These four preliminary suggestions from brain research begin to indicate why crossing disciplinary boundaries from the social sciences into brain sciences may aid our understanding of just how intensive participation as artistic creators works as context for certain kinds of linguistic and cognitive development. *How can we see our way into learning in the arts?*

The approach here may seem distasteful to some who wish to focus on art as aesthetic experience with an opaque basis. Art’s value derives from

the ways in which it arouses, disturbs or pleases us as individuals, and to profane it physiologically seems to simplify the secrets of imagination and creativity. There is certainly substance to that argument. But I would hope that the small steps we are likely to make in understanding the workings of the brain are never likely to compromise our appreciation of art any more than our understanding of the working of the human heart spoils our sense of love. Similarly our understanding of how the visual brain works will never compromise our appreciation of the miracle of sight. Certainly for me as linguist, opening the door to understanding the neurobiological foundations of learning in the arts enhances my appreciation for artists through the ages. Moreover, this information helps to build a keen sense of anticipation for young artists of the future if we can expand their opportunities to work, teach and learn through the arts.

NOTE: For expansion of the ideas given here, see article of the same title (2000) in *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 30, 1 (121-132) and Zeki, S. (1999) Art and the Brain. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6/7 (76-96).

# Arts Learning Experiences

At the heart of *Learning and the Arts* were extended arts learning workshops led by leading practitioners from across the nation. Their purpose was to provide intensive learning experiences reflecting the most current practices and to help shake off antiquated notions of what arts education can be and is. Each workshop began with discussions about how the particular lesson would be conducted with children in elementary, middle or secondary schools; a lengthy immersion in a learning experience that included art making or performance; and a time for workshop leaders and funders to talk about a range of relevant issues. Each group reported on their experiences. Funders exhibited their still life drawings, read poems, sang a key passage in an opera they'd written and read interpretive writing to accompany videos they'd produced.

As Ken Robinson noted during the Practitioner's Panel that followed the workshops, the rapt expressions on funders' faces as they emerged from the workshops and shared their performance or art work reflected the deep level of engagement students can reach when learning in and through the arts.

The workshops were:

## **You Gotta Be the Book: Theatre, Videography, Visual Arts**

*Workshop Leaders:*

**Arnold Aprill**, Executive Director, Chicago Arts Partnership in Education

**Deidre Searcy**, Director of Arts Education, Street Level Youth Media

**Cynthia Weiss**, Director of Professional Development, Chicago Arts Partnership in Education

This workshop showed how arts literacy and the reading/writing process could intersect in exciting new ways. A community of readers and artists was formed as participants responded to memoir texts through drama, visual arts and video.

## **Getting into the Central Garden**

*Workshop Leader: Marilyn Stewart,*

Professor of Arts Education, Kutztown University, Pennsylvania

Participants experienced, reflected upon and discussed the garden as an art form. Robert Irwin's *Central Garden* at

the Getty Center was the catalyst for participants to think deeply about the cultural and personal significance of art.

## **Still Life Thinking**

*Workshop Leader:*

**Ron Yrabedra**, Professor of Art Education, Florida A & M University

Participants viewed 17th century Dutch still life paintings as emblems of a joy in life's pleasures and of life's temporality. They viewed works in the Getty Museum and were guided through art critical explorations, through the actual drawing of a still life and discussion of how these learning episodes fit within the context of critical thinking and school reform.

## **From Score to Stage**

*Workshop Leaders:*

**David Dik**, Director of Education, Metropolitan Opera Guild

**Steve Weinstock**, Teaching Artist, Metropolitan Opera Guild

Participants created a slice of an original opera, including dialogue, a musical moment and a setting. The session culminated in a performance of the work. The “company” comprised the participating funders, each experiencing the various creative, technical and performance skills required to complete the task. The emphasis of this workshop was to create an original work and to examine and experience the method necessary to do so.

### **The Earl & the Sheriff**

*Workshop Leader:*

**Ellen Broderick**, Manager for Student, Teacher and Family Audiences,  
J. Paul Getty Museum

Participants were guided through two teaching and learning experiences with paintings in the Getty Museum galleries. Working both in teams and individually, participants practiced a mixture of visual, verbal and simple written strategies to develop a relationship with each painting resulting in the pleasure of authentic personal interpretation.

## **Reflections on the Arts Learning Experiences**

**K**en Robinson, Elliot Eisner, Shirley Brice Heath and the leaders of each of the arts experience sessions gathered in plenary to reflect on the meaning of those sessions with participants. This edited version of the transcript starts with a series of comments on the distinct powers of each of the arts disciplines to leverage learning and development in different ways.

It moves to consideration of how the presence of the arts transforms and enriches learning environments and closes with some suggestions for future work.

**Nick Rabkin:** We’re going to move 12 chairs up in front for the next conversation. If the artist/teachers who were part of this and Elliot, Shirley and Ken will join us, we’ll move ahead. This is the final arts exercise of the day. It’s our version of an early Mel Brooks movie.

It is an opportunity for us to reflect on the experiences we had during the art learning exercises, to connect them to the ideas and themes of the talks by Ken, Elliot and Shirley, and to ask any questions that you haven’t had a chance to ask.

**Question:** We’re trying to identify the most authentic arts in education experiences that will move kids closer to the kind of world Elliot, Shirley and Ken have described to us. Which of the exercises that we did have the qualities that do that?

**Elliot Eisner:** I’ll remind you of the qualities. All of the activities were very generative. In one case, it was a matter of transforming images into descriptive material that characterized the image. Participants had to, first, experience the quality of the image, its affective, its expressive character, whether it was the portrait or the landscape. And they had to transform that qualitative experience into some kind of linguistic equivalent.

That’s like the process that most writers engage in. The writer starts with vision and ends with words. The reader starts with the writer’s words and ends with vision. What you’ve got here is this transformative process. This is an activity that, as I said, slows down perception and engages them in a task that enables them to come out with a work.

The task in a curriculum is not the single event; it’s where you go with it. That is, you need to build up this material over time so it becomes increasingly subtle, complex, incisive—only then will it have all of the virtues that we would like to have.

**Question:** Could you comment on the distinctions among the different types of art. Does music have something more to offer kids than visual arts, dance or theater?

**Elliot Eisner:** The differences are important. Dance and music are diachronic forms, meaning that they exist over

**You need to build up this material over time so it becomes increasingly subtle, complex, incisive—only then will it have all of the virtues that we would like to have. —Elliot Eisner**

time. In visual arts, the synchronic art form, you see a configuration all at once. Each of these art forms requires different kinds of technical skills. And each of the art forms impose different requirements on the individual.

What they have in common is the sensuous surface.

What they share,

whether you're dancing, listening to music, reading a poem or making a painting, is that the meaning resides in the ways in which the qualities have been organized. In general, the commonality among the arts is in the shaping of expressive form. And the demands are different because the materials are different and the use of time is different.

**Shirley Brice Heath:** I can respond in terms of the nonschool stuff. Certainly, in terms of the payoff, theater is the thing that makes the greatest difference because of the fact that it's able to incorporate so many of the different arts, everything from dance to music to the technical aspects. So you get a broader range of experience through theater. And what's extremely important for those of us worried about literacy is that there is just so much writing and so much involvement with extended text in theater that I was astounded. And

certainly in terms of the linguistic evidence, with theater you get a greater range of genres, and all sorts of genres in oral and written language.

**David Dik:** I think we'd see the same kind of growth in music if we allowed the students to actually compose works. Very often, music programs are designed so that students learn how to imitate and perform only. If we did more with students learning to take and use the language of music, learn how to create it, we would see the same type of growth.

**Nick Rabkin:** It's worth noting that every garage band quickly gets to the point of writing their own songs, but no school marching bands do. [Laughter] Ken?

**Ken Robinson:** All the arts use different media and different materials. I saw Wynton Marsalis the other week, and the man is himself with a trumpet. And you don't say, Well this is all very well, but he's hopeless on the violin. [Laughter]

You don't feel he's diminished for that. And a lot of this, the excitement of the arts for people is finding their medium, finding the material that excites them. That's part of the need, I think, for a balanced arts education. It isn't enough just to give children experience with one form or another.

Elliot's point this morning was that the process of the arts is a kind of dialogue between meaning and material. And you don't know at the beginning what's going to come out at the end. But you have to love the material to have the conversation with it.

I don't know if I mentioned I had met Paul McCartney. Did I mention that? [Laughter] It isn't just the material. It's also the genre. You know, I mean, what would he have been without rock music and the guitar? It's a serious point. People come alive in a certain

cultural context as well. It's why it isn't just a question of giving people freedom to express themselves; you have to immerse them in a discipline of some sort. People feed off other people's stimulation. It's why creativity is linked to some conception of culture. It's a dialogue with others as well as a conversation with the material.

**Question:** What does the term *media arts* conjure up in terms of thinking about where art or art education may be going?

**Diedre Sieryc:** My organization is a media arts organization, and it brings together artists of different disciplines who have found their way using these tools that we refer to as technology. Using computers not just as these interesting magic boxes, but really taking them and using them and finding ways of speaking and expressing with them, of helping youth find voice—authentic voice—using these things. There are real opportunities there in terms of their recognizing a whole different way of expressing themselves.

**Ken Robinson:** It's quite a useful term; it's a bit meaningless, too. I mean, as you said, what it connotes is people using new technologies. But artists have always used technology. Always. And you can get led into all kinds of unhelpful debates, you know — can a television program be a work of art? Show me the program is the answer.

When photography developed in the 19th century, there were huge debates with the painters saying that a photograph can't be a work of art. Of course, you could understand this, because they were spending three months doing a portrait, and somebody came along with a Kodak and just kind of immediately... And so the only way they could counter this influence was to say, well, it's not as good as the work that we do.

But the truth of it is that photogra-

phy redefined art. Photography can produce art in the hands of an artist. It's about intention; it's about the quality of the result. A video camera in the hand of an artist can produce art. Plasticene can produce art. Anything can produce art in the hands of an artist. It's an intention and the result.

What's exciting about the media arts is that kids respond to them. They're in there and they can see possibilities that people who haven't grown up with them can't see.

Elliot was saying earlier that art practice represents the multiplicity of our intelligence. We can think in all the ways in which we experience. We can think visually; we can think in terms of movement, in terms of touch. We can think in terms of sound. And the different art forms are the result of the interaction between our natural capacities, the available technologies and the cultural context in which these things develop. They come and go. You know, in the Renaissance the major art form was the mask.

Doesn't exist anymore as an art form. The major art form of the 20th century is the novel. Didn't exist three centuries ago. They come and go. But what's consistent is this need for expression and for meaning making using the full range of our intelligences and the materials that we have at hand.

I think media arts are at the stage that photography was in at the end of the last century. It's a new landscape.

**Comment:** I am fearful that with the proliferation of after-school programs, the arts will be limited to after-school activity.

**We need to find mechanisms that support authentic learning experiences in school, that connect the life of kids in schools with the life of kids out of schools.**

—Arnold Aprill

**Arnold Aprill:** One of the advantages of the out-of-school programs is they can engage kids in a deep, complex, cognitive, reflective process. One of the problems with the way schooling is structured is it tends to work against this depth and engagement.

However, the job of kids is school. And unless learning that happens in school becomes more connected to the real lives and learning of kids, as Ken was talking about in his opening remarks, our schools are doomed. So,

**An elementary art teacher can be one of the most degrading jobs you could possibly have . . . but we can put art teachers in positions where they're not isolated, where they really become leaders.**

— *Cynthia Weiss*

nisms and pressures that help systems start to scale this up as policy.

**Question:** It seems that arts teachers haven't been very effective advocates for their own disciplines in schools. What would you advise us as funders to do to help build stronger advocacy coming from the arts teachers in the schools?

**Cynthia Weiss:** An elementary art teacher can be one of the most degrading jobs you could possibly have, because many of the jobs are art-on-a-cart. You have to move from room to room. You have up to 1000 students.

And most of the other teachers in the school perceive the art teacher as being the person who's going to allow them to go do their prep work.

But we've seen a number of art teachers transformed from that role to becoming the leaders in the schools. That's happened through a series of projects that have had a real public role. An example: an art teacher in a school at the large public housing high rise complex, Cabrini Green, did an installation for a show called *Spiritual Passports*. Cabrini is being demolished and its residents are being forced to change their lives as their homes are eliminated. He took the idea of transformations and asked the kids to make artwork about the transformation of their homes and neighborhood.

He had kids ask their parents for stories about the housing project: high-rises were filled with stories. Then they took memory boxes and filled them with found objects and text and representations of the stories from Cabrini. The boxes were then used to "reconstruct" the high rises that were being demolished, and the entire construction was installed in a gallery at a major exhibition that was covered by the press. So all of a sudden, kids' stories, parents' stories, what was happening in Cabrini became open and accessible for the rest of the city. Kids from other schools in the Cabrini area came who had no idea that the substance of their lives was a subject that you could use for an art project.

Now the art teacher is a leader in the school. We can put art teachers in positions where they're not isolated, where they really become leaders. We've seen that happen again and again when they're working together in teams.

**Ken Robinson:** Yesterday I was saying that the reason the arts don't get their due in education is because they seem to



be outside the main agenda. They don't fit with the economic agenda as perceived, and they don't fit with the dominant view of intelligence as perceived.

My answer at this moment is to not talk about "the arts." The trouble is, when you say "art," you engage all the prejudices you're trying to avoid. The word engages a set of preconceptions that has already derailed the conversation for you.

Our government keeps saying, "we need to make the most of our human resources. We need to promote creativity to meet the demands of this century. We need to cope with a rapid cultural change in a world of global cultural development." Creativity and culture are two big issues for every government in the world. And the arts are about

those two things. So it seems to me rather than say, Let's talk about the arts, and then explain what they have to do with the agenda, let's just go straight to the main agenda and say, We're talking about creativity and culture. And then we can show how the arts fit into it.

You know, that little snip of film that Shirley showed, I mean, the thing that really struck me is what always struck me; it's the look on those kids' faces, of just concentration. They were rapt. And the second time I saw that look was this afternoon when you were doing your feedback from the arts learning experiences groups. You'd had the same experience, that intense concentration of being enraptured by something and of taking it deadly seriously 'cause it meant something to you.

# Practitioners on Effective Partnerships

Researchers, including Shirley Brice Heath, cite community centers, settlement and neighborhood houses, and churches, as having some of the strongest arts-in-education programs in the country. Their research also suggests that these same after-school, Saturday and summer programs are typically located in communities whose public schools are currently failing.

**The best partnerships are those that recognize that difficulties will arise and are prepared to weather the inevitable conflicts and confusions for the sake of realizing the gains.**

These programs have helped save the lives of children by providing effective arts instruction, and building self-esteem and leadership capabilities. They appear to be quite expert at supporting young people's learning as well as their social and emotional development.

uncertain. They mean a great deal to a fairly small number of young people. When partnered with institutions, like schools, that have serious institutional heft and reach most children, these programs could have far more significance. Their power could be magnified, and they could reach a scale that is unimaginable as small community enterprises.

But there are serious difficulties involved in building productive partnerships between the arts and schools. The school day is parsed out into a schedule and is rigidly time-bound.

The arts are not. School is often about getting the right answers. The arts are not. Small arts organizations have fluid lines of communication and are non-bureaucratic. Schools are not.

Of all the panels designed by the planning committee, this one on effective partnerships between cultural organizations, schools, and community based organizations proved to be the most elusive. It is rare indeed for schools to invest the time, money and human resources for these partnerships to work and last.

We assembled a panel of practitioners — from a cultural organization, a community organization, and a school — who had overcome the odds and built strong and sustained partnerships. And we asked them to be honest about what it takes to make the partnerships work. The panel had years of practice working on collaborative programs between schools, communities and community organizations:

Moderator:

**Bonnie Pittman**, Executive Director,  
Bay Area Discovery Museum,  
Sausalito, California

Panelists:

**Russ Chapman**, Principal,  
Shady Brook Elementary,  
Bedford, Texas

**Elisa Crystal**, Executive Director,  
Armory Center for The Arts,  
Pasadena, California

**Mary Sue Sweeney Price**, Director,  
The Newark Museum,  
Newark, New Jersey

The panel's charge was two-fold: first, to discuss strategies for forming partner-

ships between schools, arts organizations, parents and community groups; and second, to discuss the role of funders and their potential impact on the arts institutions involved in successful partnerships. Although each member of the panel shared stories particular to their individual experiences, some common salient themes emerged during the course of the discussion.

Everyone agreed that partnerships are difficult and cannot be successful without the full commitment and involvement of all constituent parties. While it may be tempting to limit the frustration of consolidating the different visions, personalities, working styles and goals of numerous constituent groups by limiting the scope of groups involved, the panel agreed that some of their best outcomes have been realized in instances where the hard work of honing a *shared* vision and *mutual* goals was undertaken successfully.

The hard work of identifying and articulating shared visions and goals is closely linked to the development of leadership within a partnership. All panel members stressed the importance of realizing that successful partnerships do not rely upon the energy and influence of one or two highly visionary leaders. On the contrary, leadership, like vision, must be shared to be sustainable. In some cases, this may mean allowing nonobvious “partners,” including students, local government agencies or members of opposing groups, to be given some type of responsibility in moving the

partnership effort forward. As Pittman noted, expanded leadership serves the joint purpose of strengthening the base of support for the project, as well as empowering new individuals to become involved in shaping the perception of the arts in their school or community.

Innovation and risk were cited as often being the hallmarks of successful partnership efforts, allowing the partnership to broaden the scope of all members’ work. Price noted her experience using the mandate of whole school reform in Newark as a beginning point for developing stronger relationships with schools in order to help them fulfill their experiential learning requirements. However, anything new and expansive requires long term commitment to the effort, and often requires individual organizations to expand their institutional capacity to sustain a long term effort, either through the addition of staff, the alteration of existing staff responsibilities or the acquisition of adequate program funding. As is true of any sustained involvement, deep-seated changes are not easy, but successful partnerships have proven to be worth the effort. The best partnerships are those that recognize that difficulties will arise and are prepared to weather the inevitable conflicts and confusions for the sake of realizing the gains.

With regard to the evaluation of partnership outcomes, the panel concurred that standardized test scores seem fated to remain among the list of assessment measures relied upon by school adminis-

**I asked the question that every principal asks first: How much money is this going to cost me? And she assured me that it would be fairly inexpensive and painless. And it started the very long journey toward an interdisciplinary, vertically aligned, comprehensive arts program that has changed the way I view children, the way I view learning, the way I view my job and the way I view my life. And it is a powerful, powerful thing. In the last seven or eight years, I’ve been going around the country trying to convince my colleagues that it’s the thing to do. —Russ Chapman**

trators, parents and politicians. As Chapman indicated, this need not be worrisome over the long run. With the support of the Getty Trust, his school compared baseline student scores with scores tracked for five years. Scores rose 49 percentage points in math, 63% in reading and 36% in writing. Crystal added that new assessment measures include work with portfolios designed to encourage self-reflection and self-improvement on the part of students. Increasingly more recognized by schools and the public, portfolio measures can be coupled with test scores to help strengthen the case for the instrumental value of the arts.

Lastly, the panel discussed the potential policy implications for the work of partnerships. Members had already been involved in projects which they felt had influenced either public or institutional policies at one level or another ranging from Chapman's inclusion of students in decision-making, to the manner in which exhibitions were designed in Newark, to the process of certification for art teachers in Pasadena. Pittman and Crystal noted that work still needs to be done on the benefits to be realized for infants and preschool-aged children, as well as for middle school students during their particularly formative years.

## Recommendations to Funders from Partnership Panelists

The panel was quite excited by the opportunity to share with funders potential avenues of strategy development. Again, although various specific examples were cited, some common themes emerged:

There needs to be an evolution in the grantee-funder relationship. Foundations and organizations need to move away from project-based support and move into the development of partnerships in which funders come prepared to share resources beyond merely dollars. These include helping to convene potential partners, sharing data and contacts and providing input into strategy development and execution, including the provision of multiyear funding.

Private funders should be ready to fund projects which are not yet supported by numerous public institutions. Helping to create endowments and providing strong initial support helps projects attract

the dollars of more risk-averse public funders. This entails recognition of the fact that there are successes and failures over the long term. Partnerships should not be afraid to fail in some endeavors for fear of risking funding.

Projects which are funded should be funded with an eye to long term sustainability, including the development of a continuity plan which will ensure the ongoing success of the program. Again, this will require a longer term commitment on the part of the funder.

Leadership should be developed within the funding community to address some areas of common concern strategically. Too much money directed by too many funders to one school or one project without thought to the development of new efforts, for example, fails to produce wide-spread change. Funders should direct their funding in a way that enhances the broader picture.

# Reframing Arts in Education

**Rudy Crew**

*Executive Director, Institute for K-12 Leadership,  
University of Washington, Seattle*

*(Former Chancellor, Board of Education of the City of New York)*

**M**y purpose today is not necessarily to give you an impassioned speech about the arts, but to ask you to think strategically with me as we redefine this issue. Many times, people within the K-12 world can't define the problem themselves because they're viewing it purely as a crisis. This conversation shouldn't be driven out of a context of crises. It should be driven out of an affirmative commitment to human development.

The first part of reframing the issues of the arts in education is seeing the arts as essential to the natural world of human development. To reframe the issue, we need to create strategic networks and alliances that are committed to a vision of education that is responsive to all the essential dimensions of human development. This network will be about redrawing the lines between classroom and teacher, teacher and leader, leader and community, community and country and, ultimately, internationally. In other words, this reframing is far broader than the matter of adding the arts to the curriculum. This is about reframing education overall. And it needs to be done within the funding community, and certainly within the K-12 and the higher education community, to bring these issues into more of a national focus.

Let me first describe what I found when I came to New York. After several years of economic blight in the city and state, New York City Public Schools were without an arts program. There were no music programs, instruments or teachers and no art teachers. They all fell to the budget ax of the mid-1980s. It was in the

aftermath of those cuts that most people in the city, most educators in the city, and I dare say parents as well, began to see a diminished quality in the city's public educational system. People didn't know what was missing; they simply knew that something wasn't there.

The issue here is not, oh, we need the arts. The issue to the K-12 world and the leadership of communities and cities is the performance of schools, performance of children within those schools and the performance of the adults in those schools. This is about academic adequacy. It's about academic proficiency. It's about reading, it's about math, it's about science, it's about technology. When you boil all those disciplines down, they are about the powers of thinking, the powers of cognition, the power of being able to actually know how to fit within the social and economic structure of our nation.

In my mind, the second part of reframing the issue, has to do with social adequacy—the social behavior and the social acumen to which our children have to measure up. The real questions about children's social behavior are not just whether they cheat or have good attendance records. The real questions are do they understand how to make friends? Do they understand how to avoid conflict? The whole issue of social behavior is a big thing in America right now as it relates to public schools.

The third part of reframing the issue has to do with personal adequacy. Schools are committed to a level of human development that speaks not only to the larger mass of people and the aggregate of a

classroom or a school, but also to the individual. Our schools actually help children to understand and formulate ways of being good people, good citizens, good thinkers, good doers, good planners, to have good self-concept and so on. And there's a way, obviously, of being able to embrace the arts in there.

This information is not known by a brand new teacher sitting at PS101 in the Bronx. It's not known by the incoming new principal of a school that was recently declared an under-performing school. But you know it. What you, as funders, have available is intellectual capital about craft knowledge, building models of how the arts get implemented in schools on a larger scale. So the second point about this process is for you to assume a leadership role—not only in schools but in the larger community as well.

There are powerful partners within the respective communities of lots of schools across this country who leverage the kind of local community force that needs to be in place for new ideas to flow from your heads to theirs and from theirs to teachers, and from teachers to teachers unions, and from teachers unions to principals and so on and so forth. You need fluidity, you need integration of thought, you need an aggregate thinker and an aggregate power base in order for this process to take hold.

There ought to be a set of specific things that this process ensures. First, is this effort connected to a core set of academic, social or personal issues in our school? Why are you doing this? What value is going to be added to lives of children in schools by this work? Second, is there an open invitation to building this effort to scale? You need to think about this as a team, in terms of immediate implementation, immediate scalability, meaning at least within the next two to three years, and then give me the five-year to ten-year outlook on this.

The effort must be visible. The effort can't be either so small or so institutionally

unrecognized that it doesn't have enough push to actually get into year two or year three. The effort must become very visible both within the school community and within the larger community. Welcome the media to this initiative. Bring people in. I think part of the planning should give us an opportunity to think about who our strategic partners could and should be, whose voices within the larger community would carry if we brought them aboard.

Lastly, let me talk for a second about the role of the funding community and of the arts overall. I think we have to think about this work and this partnership as having some evidence of support and evidence of success. Does it create and sustain political, financial and academic leverage? Does this enable a connection between the service that we're offering and the needs children have?

The funding community and the arts can reclaim the market of public education, to get the children to come back from private schools and parochial schools. Your resources can be linked to real time solutions that teachers and principals and superintendents need.

In the final analysis, be aware that what you really are doing is authorizing hope. You are signatories to children's hope. When kids see that there's really a connection between what they learn academically and cognitively and what's being asked of them in their day-to-day lives, they feel the power of your signature. And I would just suggest that you really understand that this is exactly what we need in public education right now. We need your signature. And make it a signature of hope for these children. Thank you very, very much.

**“This reframing is far broader than the matter of adding the arts to the curriculum. This is about reframing education overall.”**

# Researchers' Perspectives on Emerging Best Practices

In her introductory remarks for this session, Susan Lloyd, Director, Building Community Capacity, MacArthur Foundation, recalled Rudy Crew's observation that what is in question is not whether, but rather when and how arts education will become integrated into the lives of schools. The primary catalyst for integration appears to be the strength of the case made to school leaders about the arts' critical importance to all children. The researchers' panel was intended to provide participants with an opportunity to share and discuss what is known about arts education, what still needs to be learned and what next steps may help to move the process of learning and sharing along.

The panel was moderated by **Dick Deasy**, Director of the Arts Education Partnership, a coalition of over 100 organizations that demonstrates and promotes the essential role of arts education in enabling all students to succeed in school, life and work. The three panelists were:

**Dr. James Catterall**, Professor, UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies; Co-Director of the UCLA Imagination Project; evaluator for the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE);

**Steve Seidel**, Lecturer, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Research Associate at Harvard Project Zero.

**Sandy Rieder**, Senior Study Director, Westat, Inc.; currently serving as Deputy Project Director of the Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge (TETAC) evaluation.

**D**ick Deasy began the discussion with an overview of current research relating to the arts' role in learning. These reports and the work of researchers in the field are, in his words, helping to "refute the fundamental reason the arts are marginalized in American education: namely, that they are not thought to be cognitive, that is, embodying and giving access to knowledge and mental skills."

In discussing their own work, the panelists described a spectrum of research methodologies used to identify ways in which students' lives are affected through

involvement in the arts. Research methods ranged from measuring the impact of a single program in one school, to sampling student profiles throughout a school district, to working with large-scale databases of student information and simulating experiments through comparisons of longitudinal data. Although the panelists did concede that there have been numerous studies conducted which show the arts to have little effect on the academic or social growth of students, they agreed that a growing body of research indicates a positive correlation between student achievement and involvement in the arts.

**J**ames Catterall identified the following:

- Students involved in the arts watch less TV, display more tolerant behavior toward different racial groups and perform better academically than students with similar profiles who are not involved in the arts;
- Students from lower socio-economic (SES) backgrounds who are involved in the arts tend to outscore higher SES students;

- Gaps in academic achievement between high and low SES students tend to grow as they progress in school; however, quality arts involvement for low SES students appears to help slow the growth of this achievement gap;
- Students who are permitted to write and draw in response to questions tend to demonstrate more knowledge than students who do only one or the other.

Steve Seidel discussed research that has focused less on whether the arts are beneficial to students and more on *how* they have been beneficial and what makes some programs more successful than others. This research has led to important information about the nature of successful programs:

- The ways in which many artists teach come directly from their ways of making art, including an appreciation of the processes involved in creating something complex. Whereas many academic programs try to simplify complex material for students to make it easier to learn, successful artists respect complexity and invite students to engage with it creatively;
- Successful artist teachers create a safe space in which young people can take the risks it is in their nature to want to take: “absolutely terrify-

ing, absolutely thrilling, completely addictive and life-changing; yet, safe and constructive at the same time;”

- Quality arts programs are designed to guide cognitive development in a loving way that fuses the intellectual with the spiritual—“the combustion of human spirit and cognitive discipline”—and urges the students forward in their search for truth.

Sandy Rieder observed during her STETAC evaluation, that the integration of arts-based education, and more importantly, the values that guide it, requires a radical shift in the way most schools and communities view education in general. Although more needs to be done to publicize the value of the arts as an integral part of the educational process, the reality is that not enough is known about the nature of change within schools to translate publicity into solid action planning. Until the process of change is better understood, the fundamental shifts in attitude that will be critical to the development and acceptance of quality arts-based education will be difficult to achieve. A large part of this shift may lie in the elimination of high-stakes testing which, over the last decade, has served to tie educators more and more to the instruction of content, rather than liberating them to engage more with the process of teaching and learning creatively that is so central to arts-based curricula.



# Small Group Discussions: Reflections and Next Steps

*Six discussion groups considered the practical implications of Learning and the Arts and reported on the issues that emerged from their conversations. While quite preliminary, these conversations seemed to have consistent themes, and Nick Rabkin reported on them. They are being refined and developed by an expanded leadership group. We anticipate that a concept paper/proposal for further collaboration will emerge from these planning meetings in the near term. What follows is a summary of Nick's report:*

**Internal work:** There are things to do when we go home to our own institutions and organizations. They clump into three basic categories: First is to evaluate our current grant making. Do our existing grants reflect the kind of quality that we learned about at this meeting? Second is pursuing a higher level of quality in the work we support by raising the bar and demanding more rigorous and deeper work. Third is creating strategies to institutionalize the understanding and commitment that we have started developing through this meeting. How do we align our support for education in and through the arts with our work in schools and education reform, and in child development? How do we make such alignment the policy of our institutions?

**Regional and local work:** There were a number of reports that suggested a need for more regional and local collaboration between grantmakers. Others indicated that our grantmaking strategies should be rationalized so that we don't drive grantees nuts or work at cross-purposes. Others recommended local and regional communications and advocacy strategies to promote the kind of learning that occurred here back at home. Particular attention ought to be paid to schools of education. If we want art-

ful classrooms, we need artful teachers. And so we need to be attentive to both pre-service and in-service training of teachers.

**National work:** There were many ideas about national communications and advocacy. Some of them had to do with the mechanics of communication and advocacy. How do we distribute what we know as broadly as we possibly can? Ideas include websites, clearinghouses and so forth; mapping and evaluating existing research so we know what's useful and what's not; and on the other side of that map, creating a map of the stakeholders and their positions in the field. Other ideas had to do with the development of — one group referred to it as a national commission. Perhaps the idea that was bubbling up was really the creation of a US version of *All Our Futures*, the report that Ken Robinson did in the UK. One of the interesting twists on this idea was that there was a quick and immediate consensus that it was something that private funders had to do; that it needed to be done without government. If we involved the government, it would bring in all the baggage of the old political fights around the arts and arts education. There was broad agreement that Ken's idea of dropping the word *arts* was powerful and deserved serious consideration.

Much attention was focused on schools in all of the conversations, but there was concern not to divorce youth development from the process. One of the interesting dimensions that surfaced in some of the conversations was a sense that there's going to be growing streams of revenue and money for non-school programs. There's an opportunity to build the field that way and a special concern with the professionalization of the youth development field.

# Closing Remarks

Ken Robinson

There's a very interesting book by Michael Polanyi called *Personal Knowledge*. In it he observes that in any form of knowing, any form of understanding, you're aware of what you're doing on at least two levels. He talks about these as focal and subsidiary awareness. If you're knocking a nail into a piece of wood with a hammer, focally you're aware of the head of the nail. But in a subsidiary way you're aware of lots of other things, like the weight of a hammer, the arc of your arm and the momentum. But you have to be conscious of these in the right relationship. If you suddenly start concentrating on what your arm's doing, you lose focus on the nail and miss.

This focal/subsidiary distinction is important to us in this way. For a long time arts advocates have tended to focus their attention on promoting the arts in themselves. This may seem a reasonable thing to do if you're an arts advocate. But we're all concerned about something much more. We're concerned with what the arts can do. By focusing

**You might look again at your core objectives and think whether they can be met through arts processes.**

the attention of policy makers on the arts rather than on the processes we're trying to promote, we take their eye off the ball.

The arts don't do one thing; they

do many. They promote a broad range of intellectual development. They are among a suite of ways of promoting creative thought and action. They promote an engagement with values; they promote an engagement in cultural understanding. They encourage social communication; they offer a language of feeling. And they provide modes of aesthetic engagement.

All of those are central in theory to every education system and the arts are among the ways in which they can be promoted. But if the advocacy task is seen as promoting the arts, rather than what the arts do, then the connection isn't made. And that's part of our new task.

In our cultures, arts practices have become institutionalized, and "Art" tends to be hung in frames in galleries. As a result children can feel alienated by their education from practices they feel naturally drawn towards. We need to look at how the arts enhance and express capacities that children have naturally, not to teach them institutional definitions of art.

We have to change the curriculum. In the United States and in the United Kingdom, teachers are not routinely trained to teach the arts properly. It's another example of focal and subsidiary awareness. Teachers see their job as teaching the curriculum rather than teaching children through the curriculum. Nurturing the confidence to teach the arts, is very sensitive work. It's not just about allowing people to give vent to their feelings. It's about giving them ways of doing that. It's about empowering them. That relationship is very delicate, and it needs expert training. Providing that training is a potential role for you as funders.

If you can train generations of teachers, artists and change agents, you'll have a long-term multiplying effect. And that seems to be one of your key criterion. Not just looking for projects which have some local interest, but ones which could, in the long run, have a multiplying effect through developing skills and talents among the people who will take it forward from your beginning.

Another important area in which funders can participate is in **facilitating partnerships**. Schools can no longer do the job of education on their own. They have to be seen as the center of a network of providers rather than as the sole traders. Facilitating those relationships again is delicate work.

What can you, as funders, do? I think you have three roles. First, you can provide opportunities for **innovation**. Systems cannot do that. They're not designed to do it. You can move in on a small scale, you can set something up, you can bring in the key players to them, you can energize them and make it happen. You have a wonderfully privileged position. Most of the organizations I speak to say, "We would love to do something, but we don't have the money." You do. This is a wonderfully historic meeting from that point of view. You're in a position to do it.

Perhaps your way forward would be to stop trying to compare and weigh priorities as to whether you should fund the arts instead of other program areas. Instead you might look again at your core objectives and think whether they can be met through arts processes. Do the arts projects being proposed to you provide ways of achieving your foundation's general objectives—in terms of community development, youth development, education and so on? It's not just looking at arts projects, but looking at ways in which the arts can realize objectives that you've set yourselves anyway.

The second major objective you may want to turn your attention to is promoting **research** and the gathering of evidence. A lot of the work we're concerned with falls outside the conventional definitions of research for some of the funding agencies. If you can put resources into well-planned, well-focused and well-thought-out research projects that test these ideas out, you might do more to change the national climate than almost anything else.

And the third area is promotion and **advocacy**. You can use the platforms of your foundations to gain access to opinion leaders and policy makers who need to hear these messages. A well-planned, strategic and creative dissemination of those messages could have an enormous impact in the longer term.

I've worked in the arts for a long time now, but I realize my interest isn't really in the arts at all. It's in the capacities that the arts represent. It's in what the arts illustrate about our own powers and potential.

My concern is that our education system systematically ignores and, even destroys a lot of that. I run a lot of courses now for businesses on creativity and creativity training. Business is brisk because there's a huge need in the world economy for creativity. But I wonder, why do we have to teach adults to be creative?

As children being creative comes as naturally as eating or breathing. Adults still remember how to do those things. What happened to their creativity? I think what happened is education. They went through ten years of school, which stopped their creativity. In school, children were told to stop playing, to sit still and look at the front.

There is a wonderful quote by Archbishop Temple. It seems to me to summarize the whole task of education and what the arts contribute to it. He said, "Our job in education is to teach children to feel together and to think for themselves, rather than think together and feel alone." I think if we can reverse that equation through our joint efforts through the arts, through training, through partnership and curriculum reform, then we will have done something worth doing for all our futures.

**Our job in education is to teach children to feel together and to think for themselves, rather than think together and feel alone.**  
— *Archbishop Temple*

