A Dynamic Conceptual Blueprint
for
Spokane Arts in Community School

Mathematical / Logical **Musical**

Verbal / Linguistic **Interpersonal**

SpArCS

Visual / Spatial **Intrapersonal**

Kinesthetic **Naturalist**

Art sparks learning through

the Multiple Intelligences

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The Arts Spark Transformation

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us.
We ask ourselves,
'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,
talented, fabulous?'
Actually, who are you not to be?
Your playing small does not serve the world.
We were born to make and to manifest
the glory of God that is within us.
It is not just in some of us;
it is in everyone."

-- Marianne Williamson

The arts call for students to stretch their inner resources and put them to work to attain their own image of perfection. Through the arts, students learn that they can make their own unexceptional beings extraordinary and uncommon. They can invent a broader universe in which to see new dimensions and create their own visions of the world as it was, is, and might be.

-- Charles Fowler

Preface

**"What if imagination and art are not frosting at all,
but the fountainhead of human experience?"**

-- Rollo May

My coursework in the Lesley College Master's in Education program, *Integrating the Arts into the Curriculum*, has led me through an evolutionary journey as a person and as a teacher. I began as a newly-certificated elementary teacher, a blank, or vaguely-imprinted slate, philosophically speaking. Now, at the conclusion of my eighteen months of creative exploration and study, I am a wildly colorful work of graffiti, pulsating with vision and determination to start an "arts-based" school within the Spokane public school system.

Early in my enrollment at the Creative Arts program, two graduates, Sara Devins and Melanie Jablonski, invited me to join them in their on-going discussion about the development of a plan for a public school program that would teach academic subjects through the arts, as well as provide specialized instruction in arts as discrete disciplines. I eagerly accepted their invitation, and found that the "real-world" possibility of such an arts-integrated school cast a rosy tint of lively meaning, relevance and purposefulness onto my Lesley studies. As my understanding of the value of the arts in learning has grown, my commitment to our school has deepened.

This final Lesley writing project provides me with the opportunity to distill what I have learned about the arts in education, and to apply these essences to the conceptualization of our school. In an attempt to define a comprehensive group vision, I have worked with my two teacher-colleagues to articulate our respective philosophical orientations. Through trial and error, I discovered that the most meaningful and therefore, productive way to find the underlying bones of our educational perspectives, was to ask questions that led to the telling of personal stories. As we wove narratives about learning in our own lives, we found a way into the feeling core of our strongest convictions about educational values. This process served to illuminate the "emerging purposes and directions" (Zaret, 1986) that will be most formative in constructing the philosophical foundation of our school.

I began my work on this paper by inviting my colleagues, Sara, Charlie and Melanie, to discuss the "conceptual underpinnings" for our school. I had planned to focus on philosophical questions about the nature of reality and knowledge, and the guiding values that will form the foundation of our curriculum. This approach was so vague, that none of us had much to say. Then, one person began to relate the general topic to a memory of what it

was like to be a kid in school. The discussion turned a corner when I began to ask more personal questions about each of our own memories of learning -- within and outside of school. Through personal narratives about learning in our own lives, we were able to uncover the seeds of our present day perspectives on education and on our future school. In *Teachers as Curriculum Planners* (1988), Connelly and Clandinin validate and illuminate this approach in saying:

> When we say that understanding our own narrative is a metaphor for understanding the curriculum of our students, we are saying that if you understand what makes up the curriculum of the person most important to you, namely, yourself, you will better understand the difficulties, whys, and wherefores of the curriculum of your students. There is no better way to study curriculum than to study ourselves. . . Your curriculum is a metaphor for understanding your students' curriculum. (p.31)

Through our personal narratives, we discovered that, despite the differences in our educational backgrounds, we shared some basic elements of the learning experience which influence our vision of the possibilities for a better way to educate children. This core of what Donald Oliver (1990) calls "grounded knowing" about the nature of learning, is the primary source of influence on the philosophical underpinnings for our school, which I will outline in detail in Part II of this paper.

Introduction

> The arts are essential parts of the human experience; they are not a frill. We recommend that all students study the arts to discover how human beings communicate, not only with words, but through music, dance, and the visual arts. During our visits [to schools] we found the arts to be shamefully neglected. Courses in the arts were the last to come and the first to go.
>
> -- Dr. Ernest Boyer
> The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Research in the last thirty years indicates that integrating the arts into the basic school curriculum enhances student learning. Exposure to the arts teaches many skills, among them creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, self-discipline, risk-taking, teamwork, and communication. We feel that an arts-based school is uniquely capable of providing the kind of comprehensive education that will foster these qualities in our children, so that they may become contributing citizens, lifelong learners, and well-rounded human beings who are qualified to rise to the formidable challenges of our rapidly changing society with creativity and imagination.

Although many school systems across the nation have successfully adopted arts-based programs, such an option dos not currently exist within the Spokane public schools. We three teachers, along with a burgeoning group of local parents, are proposing just such a school for the students of the Spokane School District.

Though there are a number of classroom teachers who are currently integrating the arts into their academic curricula, they are working in relative isolation, without the support of a school-wide commitment to the arts. The kind of program that we are conceiving for SpArCS, on the other hand, is dependent upon a community of educators who will work closely together to create a dynamic, evolving curriculum (Zaret, 1986, p. 46) in which programs of all grade levels are arts-integrated to form a spiraling continuum of learning experiences that provide abundant opportunities for children to understand relationships and connections that transcend disciplinary boundaries.

In Part I of this paper I will define the scope of the term, "arts-based education", and present a rationale for the arts, which will highlight the recent thinking and research on why the arts warrant a central role in the basic public school curriculum. I will point to some key

examples of successful arts-based schools and programs in the world. The rationale will include discussion of an expanding definition of the nature of intelligence, focussing on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence (MI) Theory. I will describe how Gardner's seven or more intelligences can be developed in all students by teaching to and through the arts. Finally, I will proffer an argument for the establishment of an arts-based school such as SpArCS, in Spokane.

Part II of this paper is the dynamic conceptual blueprint that will serve as our guide in planning SpArCS. I will sketch the vision in broad strokes by outlining our general orientation to curriculum. This outline will begin by establishing the nature of our educational aims through a description of the philosophical basis of our vision for SpArCS. I will explain our concept of the roles of teachers and students, as well as members of the surrounding community who will be actively involved in our program in a school/community partnership program. Finally, I will present the key characteristics of our curriculum content and the nature of our evaluative processes.

Part II of the paper is a called a *dynamic* conceptual blueprint because of what theorist Esther Zaret (1986) terms, "The Uncertainty Principle". In Zaret's phenomenological view, "a curriculum is created, acted upon, and recreated when a particular group of people at a particular time in a particular school setting work and play together in fulfilling their emerging purposes and directions" (p.47). Our school vision is of a place where predetermined, measurable ends are considered secondary to the planned opportunities for learning activities which deliberately invite the real-life experiences of "tentativeness, ambiguity, unpredictability, and infinite possibilities" (p. 47) for the transformation of the self via the transformative power of the arts.

The procedure for the establishment of alternative educational programs as outlined by the Spokane School District, dictates the submission of a series of specific letters, outlines, and proposals, all of which will be based upon the ideas that will be presented herein. Therefore, this paper will help us to navigate along the serendipitous route through a much more extensive body of work, which may ultimately be manifested in the form of a K-12 school, tentatively named, "SpArCS", or "Spokane Arts in Community School".

Part I

Arts-Based Education:
A Definition and Rationale

> The arts -- music, dance, theatre, and the visual art -- are intellectual disciplines of substance. Art skills and processes, knowledge and history, can be taught to and learned by all students, not just the talented. They also enhance learning for everyone across the academic spectrum and therefore are of great value for today's students. Students who participate in arts programs are more likely to succeed and become leaders in whatever field of endeavor they choose."
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> -- Nancy S. Grasmick,
> State Superintendent of Schools, Maryland

The term "arts" has had different meanings in the educational arena over the years. According to the current National Standards, as well as our Washington State Essential Learnings, the term "arts" refers to music, dance, drama and the visual arts. Arts-based education is a term that applies to any learning delivery system in which the arts are used to support learning across the academic curriculum. Additionally, the arts are considered to be intrinsically valuable as discrete disciplines in themselves, and therefore, in this model, thought worthy of being taught separately, as core subjects.

Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the U.S. Department of Education in 1983, the educational reform movement has re-examined the concept of "basic education", shifting the emphasis away from the traditional teaching of information recall, comprehension, and application of knowledge, which fall into the three lowest categories of cognition in Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Instead, curricular reform drives educators to focus on the higher levels of cognition, necessitating the design of learning experiences that promote such skills as analysis, synthesis, critical thinking, and more.

The arts encompass symbol systems that have traditionally been associated with emotion rather than thought. Consequently, they have been considered a superfluous

diversion from the serious business of learning through the linguistic and numerical systems that are considered logic-based, and therefore essential to functioning effectively in our culture. However, many students, particularly those who are visual and kinesthetic learners, have difficulty making sense of the abstract symbol systems used in reading and mathematics; and the arts provide alternative symbolic languages that involve students in concrete experiences that can help all students at every ability level to go far beyond mastery of "the basics".

The distinguishing feature of the human being has been identified by philosophers and scientists alike, as "the capacity to create and manipulate symbol systems" (Eisner, 1994, p. 79). Language and mathematics are just two of the forms through which individuals represent and develop "evanescent" ideas and feelings in a process of creative thinking that makes communication possible.

Music, dance, drama, and visual arts are equally legitimate symbol systems which are used to make sense of and give expression to human experience. These symbol systems have generally been considered of lesser importance than reading, writing, mathematics, and the sciences in the curriculum, largely because they are associated with vague and subjective perception, rather than reason.

Yet, such a real-world pragmatist as Jerry Zaltman (in Oddleifson, 1997, p.7) of the Harvard Business School points out that eighty percent of all communication is non-verbal, with two-thirds of all stimuli that reaches the brain being visual, and the other one-third being transmitted via sound, taste, smell, and touch. Thoughts, which are based upon this sensory input, occur primarily as images, and only rarely as verbal images. Zaltman and many others believe that thought is by nature more figurative than literal, and that metaphor, "the representation of one thing in terms of another" are fundamental to cognition. (p.7) Zaltman's holistic view of abstract thought is that emotion and perception, along with logic, are "mutually dependent and inseparable dynamics" in human thinking and knowing. (p.7) Zaltman's viewpoint is not an anomaly in the business world. Edward de Bono, (in Oddleifson, 1997) teacher at Oxford and Harvard, and consultant on creative thinking to corporate America, writes that

> We need to move from our exclusive concern with the logic of processing, or reason, to the logic of perception. Perception is the basis of wisdom. For twenty-four centuries we have put all our intellectual effort into the logic of reason rather than the logic of perception. Yet in the conduct of human affairs perception is far more important. (p.9)

Inspite of the predominance of a rationalistic world view that separated reason from perception, as first articulated by Plato, artists have always sought knowledge and understanding of the world through the senses. Renaissance scientist and artist, Leonardo DaVinci said, "All our knowledge has its origins in our perceptions". In a similar vein, Einstein once explained that his insight into the theory of relativity came to him through listening to music. He revealed his multi-dimensional approach to the search for understanding of the physical universe in saying that, "The aim of science is the conceptual comprehension and connection as complete as possible of the sense experiences in their full diversity". (in Oddleifson, 1997, p.38) Eric Oddleifson, a business executive who is a

passionate proponent of the arts in education, points out that the aim of arts is similar. Both artists and scientists use perception and reason to investigate the world in a search for coherence and meaning.

Todd Siler (1995), artist, scientist and creator of the ArtScience program in the Cherry Creek, Colorado School District, further describes the correlation between the kinds of thinking used in the arts and sciences:

> Both art and science are creative ways of understanding the world and representing what we know. They teach us how to explore and analyze what we are seeing; how to communicate our personal imaginings; and how to appreciate the depth and reach of our imaginations. (p. 28) Art is what scientists do when they hypothesize and create. Science is what artists do when their expressions test what they hypothesize and create. (p. 42)

Parallels which can be drawn between the arts and sciences provide justification for the arts in education; but the arts should not only be valued for the ways in which they are similar to sciences. Since the earliest humans began the quest for meaning through the creation and manipulation of symbolic forms, the arts have served as a vehicle for exploration into the emotional, intuitive, and irrational realms of existence. Science and technology have become an essential point of reference in our way of life, and we rely on these disciplines in our search for meaning and purpose. It is critical, though, that we step back and acknowledge that we are emotional, intuitive and perceiving, as well as rational beings. Our existence, and the continuation of life on the planet depend as much on the nurturance of the human spirit, as of the human mind. Science and technology can never answer the needs that lie at the core of our humanity.

The arts are "basic" to the fully functioning human being, and in the absence of arts, the curriculum is incomplete. A comprehensive education actively cultivates the whole human being. Our children deserve the full version of the "basics", which includes the arts with their ability to "enrich the curriculum by extending awareness and comprehension while affirming the interconnectedness of all forms knowing" (Fowler, 1994, p.11).

Robert Root-Bernstein, (in Oddleifson, 1997) a biologist, cellist, and MacArthur fellow articulates his concept of how education in arts contribute to cognitive processes that are attributed to the traditional "basics". It is his contention that the arts provide "tools of thought" which help us make sense of facts through creative thinking. These "tools" , which are developed through arts education, include metaphor, analogy, formation and recognition or pattern, visual and kinesthetic thinking, manual manipulation, playacting, modeling, and aesthetic discernment. (p.9) We must incorporate all available symbol systems, including those which are embodied in dance, drama, music and visual arts, into the educational experiences that we provide our young. Without access to the range of all symbolic languages, including the "tools of thought" that the arts provide, the enormously complex human brain is tragically underutilized. The term "literacy", which is normally limited to the ability to read and write, must be expanded to include "the encoding or decoding of information in any of the forms that humans use to convey meaning" (Eisner, 1994, p.81). The potential for the development of these "multiple forms of literacy" in our young, is embodied in the arts, and in arts-based education.

In an age when computers store, retrieve, and compute information far more effectively and efficiently than we do, it is our unique human ability to supply insight and wisdom -- to make meaning -- out of information, that distinguishes us from the technologies that we create. Computer scientist Clifford Stoll (1995) wrote, "meaning doesn't come from data alone. Creative problem solving depends on context, interrelationships, and experience" (Stoll, 1995, p.134). With the wide array of symbolic languages that is available through inclusion of the arts, we have more ways to discover interrelationships that help us to interpret and represent our experience in the world.

Brain research has provided substantial data to show how the arts may integrate the neurological functions of the brain, and therefore contribute significantly to learning across the curriculum. Nobel Prize winner Dr. Robert Sperry examined the analytical, verbal and sequential thought patterns of the left hemisphere; and the creative, sensory and global thinking patterns of the right hemisphere. His research led him to conclude that, "when left and right hemispheric processes are used in tandem, learning and retention increase" (MAETF, 1990, p4) By integrating the arts into the traditional curriculum, both hemispheres of the brain are engaged in the learning process, and the inter-hemispheric functioning of the brain itself is neurologically strengthened.

Evidence of the powerful effect of the arts in learning can be found in schools around the world. At John F. Kennedy High School and eight other high schools in New York City, a program called Reading Improvement through Art (R.I.T.A) was implemented in 1975 for tenth graders whose reading performance had worsened over a two-year period. Daily visual arts were infused into their reading program, causing a one-year increase in their reading scores on standardized tests for every six months in the program. The R.I.T.A program was still operating as of the publication of *The Final Report* by the Missouri Arts Education Task Force in 1990.

The success of R.I.T.A. is echoed in the work of Mona Brookes, founder of Monart Drawing Schools and author of *Drawing With Children* . Brookes trains teachers to incorporate drawing and seeing through her "visual alphabet", a lexicon of visual forms which has had a dramatic influence on children's reading readiness and ability to recognize letters. School districts have reported as much as 20% increases in reading, writing, and math scores as a result of these visual art experiences. (New Horizons for Learning, 1997)

Hungary, which has one of the most intensive school music programs in the world, with mandatory voice and instrument training given twice a week for the first eight years of schooling, ranked first out of 17 nations in a survey of science achievement of eighth and ninth graders. In the same survey, Japan and Holland, which also teach music throughout the school years, were the second and third highest achieving countries, while the U.S. came in 14th (New Horizons for Learning, 1997).

Eric Oddleifson (1997) reports that an esteemed Japanese mathematics teacher, whose nearly two million students exhibit unbelievable math ability for their age and grade level, was asked, "What would you say is the most effective way of heightening children's mental ability at the earliest possible stages?" He answered, "The finest start for infants is to sing songs. This helps to elevate their powers of understanding, and they register astounding speed in learning math and languages" (p12).

The effect of the arts on academic achievement has also been noted by the College Entrance Examination Board, which found that students who took more than four years of music and arts scored higher on both the verbal and math sections of the SAT than students who took these subjects for less than a year (Sautter, 1994).

In the world of business, Silicon Valley's top engineers and technical designers are known to be practicing musicians. Elsewhere in corporate America, Ken Chenault, an African-American, and the Chairman and CEO of American Express, was schooled in the arts-based Waldorf system. When Chenault was asked what he values most from his experience in Waldorf education, he described it as a sense of being able to "feel his consciousness at all times". (p 11) These and other persuasive examples of the powerful effect of arts on cognition and learning in schools and workplaces around the world, could fill volumes.

Rather than teaching by telling students what to think, the arts invite students to become mentally and physically engaged in sorting out information, reflecting on it, and articulating their own understanding through the given medium. Through this process of critical thinking, analysis, creativity and judgement "they learn from the inside out rather than from the outside in" (Fowler, 1994, p.5).

The increasing attention on teaching *how*, rather than *what* to think and learn which sets the tone of the current educational reform movement, is accompanied by a growing recognition of the need for new definitions and measures of the human intellect. Stanford University professor Elliot Eisner (1982) points out that, "A view of cognition that restricts thinking and knowing to forms of mentation that are exclusively discursive or mathematical leaves out far more than it includes". (p.29) Eisner's point of view is reflective of the work of Howard Gardner, a cognitive psychologist and co-director of Project Zero at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, whose research over nearly thirty years has fueled an expanding definition of the very nature of intelligence.

Instead of basing his concept of intelligence on that which can be quantified through paper and pencil tests, Gardner describes intelligence as:

> a set of problem-solving skills, enabling the individual to resolve genuine problems of difficulties that he or she encounters, and when appropriate, to create an effective product; it also entails the potential for finding or creating problems, thereby laying the groundwork for the acquisition of new knowledge. (p.61)

In his book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983), Howard Gardner delineates seven distinct areas of human intelligence: linguistic, logical/mathematical, bodily/kinesthetic, spatial, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. The "basic skills" that comprise the traditional curriculum, are founded in the linguistic and logical/mathematical intelligences; however, the expanding notion of intelligence that is typified by the research of Gardner and Project Zero, provides compelling evidence that, by teaching and learning through the seven (or more) intelligences, our schools can provide all types of students with enhanced opportunities for improved academic achievement.

The arts open up natural pathways to learning through the seven intelligences. Subject matter in all content areas can be taught through the arts which activate and develop the linguistic, logical/mathematical, kinesthetic, musical, visual/spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. In *Frames of Mind* , Gardner discusses the importance of exposing students to experiences that are rich in all of the seven intelligences, so that the inherent strengths of each individual can be "observed, nurtured and engaged" (in Missouri Arts Education Task Force, 1990, p. 5).

Gardner's research suggests that intelligence is not an intractable biological endowment, but rather, virtually everyone has the potential to develop all seven intelligences to a relatively high level. By teaching and learning within the confines of a traditional linguistic/mathematical definition of intelligence, we deny the full spectrum of innate strengths that each child potentially offers. On the other hand, MI theory presents a foundation for providing all students with multiple routes to understanding, so that, as a society faced with increasingly complex opportunities and challenges, we maximize our potential for success.

Individual differences and many ways of knowing and thinking are built into Gardner's MI Theory. Gardner puts forth the idea that the development of intelligence is largely contextual; therefore, historical, social, cultural, and economic influences can result in very different ways of thinking, learning, and behaving. In many American school districts today, over a hundred languages, representing as many cultures and traditions, are spoken. Children with different kinds of abilities and disabilities, along with children of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, must learn together in one classroom. In our increasingly global society, it is absolutely necessary to teach in ways that will speak to all learning styles, and reach children of multi-cultural backgrounds. By helping students experience cultures from inside, the arts offer the means to reach the great diversity of human beings, while increasing multi-cultural understanding, cooperation, and tolerance of diverse values and viewpoints (MAETF, 1990, p.48).

Not only do the arts provide students with a diverse network of pathways to learning, they also give teachers access into the alternative forms of assessment which are used to determine the effectiveness of their curriculum. Inherent in the expanded concept of thinking and knowing is a focus on the quality of learning experiences, not on a numerical quantity that can be derived from a standardized test that is removed from and only distantly related to the tasks students perform in their natural learning environment.

In Gardner's view, IQ's and other numerical measures of intelligence are time-consuming, and useful only as a means of ranking children, instead of helping them to learn better (Chalfen, 1997, p.71). Furthermore, since these kinds of tests are based on the traditional vision of the scope of cognition, they are an incomplete and only partially valid representation of intelligence and learning. Miller (1988) urges: "The teacher must face the whole child who can never be limited by our categories and priorities. Ultimately, we must engage the child in all her richness rather than reduce her to our own preconceptions" (p.3).

As a means of attaining a truer representation of the "whole child", Gardner advocates assessment of intelligence through observation of students as they engage in authentic tasks in a familiar and naturalistic setting. Since the arts allow for a seamless connection between

motivation, instruction, practical application, and assessment, they are a perfect lens through which Gardner's concept of intelligence might be observed and assessed. The arts provide teachers with a many-faceted view of student progress, and an authentic source of information for the design of ensuing learning experiences. Thus, the arts naturally lend themselves to the increasingly accepted forms of highly individualized, authentic assessment such as anecdotal records, portfolio assessment, self-evaluative rubricks, journal entries and group critiques during and following assignments.

Schools that integrate the arts into the standard curriculum, and teach arts as academic subjects by themselves, demonstrate the power of the arts to activate and nurture the seven intelligences -- while dramatically improving academic performance. The arts-based Ashley River School in South Carolina, which accepts students on a first come, first served basis, has a waiting list of 1200 families. Ashley River is rated second academically in its city and county, surpassed only by a magnet school for the academically gifted. Even though thirty-three percent of its students are considered learning disabled, and the school is located in one of the lowest socio-economic areas of the city, Ashley River's test scores are markedly higher than the state averages (Oddleifson, 1997, p.12).

At the Key School in Indianapolis Gardner's MI theory and the arts are central elements in the curriculum. Music, visual arts, creative dramatics, and dance are offered as separate academic subjects to all students at every grade level by specialists who insure a high quality of instruction in a comprehensive arts curriculum. The arts are also integrated into the standard curriculum, so that the seven intelligences can be activated throughout the school day. The Key School is considered one of the best elementary schools in the country by the National Education Association.

Clearly, the arts, when effectively taught, can provide the kinds of learning experiences that help learners reach a high level of the cognitive achievement. The discipline of learning to take a raw mental image, ideas or feeling, and give it a form that makes it an aesthetically pleasing, effective work of visual or performing art through processes of risk-taking, cooperating, and problem finding and solving, exercises a wide range of thinking skills. Creating a work of art helps students to make sense of their educational encounters in a way that integrates objective knowledge of the world with subjective experience and perception.

In terms of affective development, the arts generate self-esteem and a positive attitude toward learning. Education in the arts gives students opportunities to discover such intrinsic rewards as following processes from inception to completion; of bringing the inner world into the outer world of concrete reality; of working hard to communicate ideas of personal importance with working knowledge of a wide range of symbolic languages. Creative thinking that is nurtured through the arts leads to making connections which lead to understanding within and across disciplines; understanding generates curiosity, awakens a sense of aliveness, and sets in motion a driving motivation to pursue new discoveries. Theodore Sizer, chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools, (in Hanna, 1994) reports from his own experience:

> The excitement of the arts, the discipline they require, and the rewards of a successful performance [or process/product] can propel many otherwise

> uninspired students toward academic achievement and productive citizenship. Arts education may be a cure for some students' alienation from school. (p.603)

The impact of the arts on students and their capacity for learning is so powerful, according to Eric Oddliefson (1992), that "most of the desired outcomes now recognized to be at the heart of the [educational] reform effort in America can be achieved most effectively and with the least cost through the arts. . . . Tax payers get more 'bang for the buck' when the arts are drawn into the center of the curriculum" (p.4).

The Introduction to the "National Standards for Education in the Arts" (in Oddleifson, 1997) makes a strong case for the central place of arts in the basic curriculum:

> The arts cultivate the whole child, gradually building many forms of literacy while developing intuition, reasoning, imagination, and dexterity into unique forms of expression and communication. Arts education helps students by initiating them into different modes of perceiving and thinking. The almost wholly verbal orientation of most modern education teaches students that the "normal" way to think is linear and sequential, in logical patterns, from beginning to end and from cause to effect. In this dominant mode, students learn to trust mainly those symbol systems that separate the experiencing person from what that person experiences, the better to provide "objective" descriptions of the world -- usually in the form of words and numbers. The intellectual wager here is that one comes to "know" a thing best by differentiating and abstracting.
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> But the arts make a different wager. The arts trust the direct experience of the senses and the unmediated flash of insight as legitimate sources of truth. Their goal is to break down the wall between the person and the experience, between verbal and nonverbal, between the strictly logical and the emotional -- the better to gain an understanding of the Whole. Both approaches are powerful and both are necessary; to deny students either is to disable them. (p.48)

Spokane is a city with a significant community of Native Americans, as well as a growing population from world cultures. Our classrooms are seeing increasing numbers of students with physical, behavioral and cognitive learning disabilities. In the face of these and other mounting challenges to educators that arise from a diversity of needs, the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALR's) mandate that our schools raise the standard of public education to an unprecedented level.

Many of our local teachers and administrators seem convinced that this situation calls for a tightening up of the curriculum. Several teachers have reported that, at a District inservice about the EALR's, they were warned there was "no more time for fun" in our classrooms. Yet, on a foray to some of Seattle and Tacoma's alternative schools, where the EALR's are certainly to be taken as seriously as they are in Spokane, we were surprised to find that a sense of joy in learning was distinctly observable in classrooms and in hallways. There, students were making clay relief maps, and using jig saws to cut out large shapes representing the continents. An artist-in-residence was teaching primary children to create their own variations of basic rhythms on "junk percussion". Next door, in a mirrored studio with shiny new oak floors, that had been built with grant money, a dance specialist taught creative movement as a regular part of the curriculum to every grade level. The large

hallway outside of these classrooms had been turned into a full-time gallery, where student-built cases set off an impressive variety of three-dimensional art work, and the walls were aesthetically laden with tapestries, masks, paintings, drawings, and other forms of creative expression.

Clearly, in this school, renamed the Tacoma Center for the Expressive Arts, and in a number of other schools that we visited, the arts are alive and well in the curriculum. We queried everyone we met about the EALR's saying, "Well, aren't you worried about the new tests?" Everyone, including teachers, principals, and even a State Representative, responded with a different version of the same idea: It is precisely by teaching and learning through the arts that we have the most powerful means of attaining the new, higher academic standards for the greatest number of students. Exposure to the irrefutable exuberance in education that is made possible through the arts has fueled our determination to create an arts-based program here in Spokane. Educationally speaking, the creative arts are in the air, and it's only a matter time before their enlivening breezes blow into Spokane to ignite SpArCS, the Spokane Arts in Community School.

Part II

SpArCS: Sketching the Vision

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.

-- Goethe

The Preface of this paper alludes to the fact that we three teachers who are developing a proposal for an arts-based school in Spokane, discovered the value of personal narrative in looking for ways to articulate our philosophical perspectives on the importance of arts in education. Following is a description that is distilled from what we learned about ourselves in a series of these storytelling sessions.

Common to all of our experience in schools was an absence of focus upon self-discovery and self-knowledge. We believe that a relationship to the Self must be the central starting-point for all learning, just as we have begun this project by looking into our own lives through narrative. Since the arts help us make sense of our experiences, self-reflective thinking is fostered by the arts, strengthening our understanding of ourselves and of our place in the world around us.

A second key element of learning that was lacking in all of our schooling is a relationship with others that is nourished through a sense of belonging to a supportive community where the learner feels invited to let him/herself be fully known by one another. The supportive community provides a close relationship with a caring adult or mentor who guides each child in the adventure of learning, and encourages that child to develop his/her own strengths. The arts nourish community by helping each of its members to develop a unique "voice", whether it be through music, dance, drama, storytelling, poetry, visual art, or another art form. Through the arts each child can be known and respected in ways that might go unnoticed in the traditional classroom. The arts help us to understand and value diverse ways of being and acting in the world.

A third component of learning that has been of key importance to each of us, is a relationship with the natural world. Each of us has developed a personal connection with nature that is characterized by what Rachel Carson (1956) called, "the sense of wonder". A deep relationship with nature teaches us lessons that are of vital importance to our lives and to all life on our planet. We worry that, because children today are plugged in to an electronic ersatz reality that separates them from the real world, especially the natural world,

they become caught up in a seductive surrogate for experience that may ultimately dehumanize our society. In the preface to his visionary book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram (1996) writes:

> We must renew our acquaintance with the sensuous world in which our techniques and technologies are all rooted. Without the oxygenating breath of the forests, without the clutch of gravity and the tumbled magic of river rapids, we have no distance from our technologies, no way of assessing their limitations, no way to keep ourselves from turning into them. . . Direct, sensuous reality, in all its more-than-human mystery, remains the sole solid touchstone for an experiential world now inundated with electronically-generated vistas and engineered pleasures; only in regular contact with the tangible ground and sky can we learn how to orient and to navigate in the multiple dimensions that now claim us. (p. ix-x)

The arts can enrich our ability to perceive and appreciate the world around us. The study of the natural world through the sciences can be significantly enhanced through the arts, which allow students to more deeply understand factual information by increasing the opportunities for making meaningful connections. Arts and the natural sciences both involve higher order thinking skills such as hypothesis, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and critical and creative thinking. Many of the outstanding contributions that have been made to world cultures throughout history are attributable to the marriage of the arts and sciences. Renaissance explorer, creator, learner, teacher and communicator, Leonardo da Vinci documented and interpreted his insatiable curiosity to understand the world and the laws of nature in his "O Reader" notebooks, which "directly reveal his method of inquiry and visualization as he endeavored to understand and describe our place in nature and nature’s place in us" (Siler, 1995, p. 27).

In our view, it is learning that makes us truly alive and present in the world. A passionate life is a continuum of learning experiences which allow for the unfolding of the whole human being. Learning is essential to our physical, and mental health; and it nourishes our human spirit. If we are incapable of receiving the abundant lessons that life offers, our ability to become fully and richly human is impaired.

We feel strongly that it is the role of parents and teachers to model curiosity and a love for learning. Children who see the significant adults in their lives passionately investigating and reflecting upon the world within and around, have a better chance of retaining their rightfully inherited desire to discover and understand the connections and relationships that exist in our seemingly fragmented world.

We envision a school that is closely connected to members of the local and global community outside the school. We plan to initiate partnerships with local arts museums including the children’s museum; the symphony and opera; Civic Theatre; people of the indigenous tribes; organic farmers such as Paradise Farms in Idaho; professional artists and artisans; architectural and engineering offices; businesses and other organizations. Through such partnerships, our students will have enhanced opportunities to discover connections between academic learning and the real-world.

Our general orientation to curriculum is most closely aligned with what is termed "Cognitive Pluralism", which emphasizes the "plurality of knowledge and unique functions of different cognitive forms" (Eisner, 1994, p.80) that are accessible through the multiplicity of symbolic languages embodied in the creative arts. Another feature of this curricular orientation is the "plurality of intelligence" described by Gardner (1983) in his Theory of Multiple Intelligences.

We regard the arts as natural pathways for all kinds of learners to make connections through the power of their own creativity. Arts-based education draws on both cognition and perception, knowledge and experience, thereby integrating these complementary aspects of intelligence, and involving the whole student, not a fragmented part of what each student brings to the learning experience.

Our vision for SpArCS is neither revolutionary, nor is it even innovative. As described in Part I of this paper, there are many programs around the country that place a strong emphasis on the arts in the regular school curriculum. The school that we envision is based upon these already-established models which provide a wealth of "solid, accumulated experience", demonstrating that "their practicability is reasonably evident" (Reimer, 1980, p.154) and that SpArCS too, has potential for success.

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